# Only Through the Doctrine of the Lutheran Church is All Glory Given to God Alone.

An English translation from the original German
of a series of 11 essays delivered
to the Western District,
Evangelical-Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States
in the years 1873 through 1886.

by

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This translation was produced using
the available machine and AI translators of the time.
It was compared to the translations
published by a major Lutheran publisher
in the years 1983 and 1992.

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[Manteufel referenced this essay in his 2004/2005 Pieper Lectures essay "Walther and the Scriptures", but not extensively. — The CPH book that contains an English translation of this essay is listed on the Internet Archive but is not available to borrow. Translator August Suelflow omitted some sections due to "space limitations". This essay's translation is on pp. 11-63. — German text here.]

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# Proceedings of the Synod.

As the subject of the actual doctrinal negotiations, the Synod took up the

## Theses

for discussion. They follow here with the explanations and remarks made by the Synod.

### That Only Through the Doctrine of the Lutheran Church is All Glory Given to God Alone, an Incontrovertible Proof that the Doctrine of the Same is the Only True One.

The task set here is to prove that the Lutheran religion is the only true one, and this is proved by the fact that in all its teachings all glory is given to God alone. For if we first consider what a religion is, then what a visible church is, and take into account the principal doctrines of the Lutheran church, it will be evident that the doctrine of this church is the only true one, since in all these doctrines it gives all glory to God alone.

#### Thesis I. ^

Since religion is the way of worshipping God, the only true religion is that which in all its doctrines gives all glory to God alone.

There are various doctrines in the world; but religion has to do with the relation of man to God; it speaks of the relation in which man stands to God. The doctrine of science, for example, deals with nature; the doctrine of medicine deals with the nature of bodily diseases and the means of curing them; but if you ask any man what religion is, the answer will always be: It deals with the relationship of man to God.

This will be remembered beforehand, because the word "religion" itself does not occur in the Bible. But the word used for it in Scripture is "religion" (*Gottesdienst*). Paul says in Acts 26: "For I was a Pharisee, which is the strictest sect of our religion (in Greek: θρησχεία), i.e. the Pharisee sect is the strictest in the Jewish religion. Here we have the scriptural basis for the fact that religion deals with what man's relationship to God must be.

The following passages of Holy Scripture serve to prove this thesis:

Isaiah 42:8: "I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images." So God alone wants the honor. He only wants to be revered if all honor is given to Him alone; and therefore, as far as a man gives honor to a man, he takes away God's honor and casts Him from His throne.

Romans 1:21, 25: "For although they knew God they did not honor Him as God or give thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. . . because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever." Paul testifies to us here that the first apostasy of the Gentiles consisted in the fact that they did not praise God, did not think of Him, did not give Him all the glory, but gave it to the creature. The first apostasy from true religion in paradise also consisted in the fact that people wanted to be like God and thus robbed Him of His honor.

John 7:18: "He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him." According to Scripture, then, he is a founder of false religion who pretends to be sent by God, but establishes a religion through which God is not honored. What a cursed religion it is, therefore, when a man gives himself honor through any teaching of his religion. This passage, which is well worth noting, is preceded by the words: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

John 8:48: "Jesus answered: I have no devil, but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me." Thus Christ proves that he has nothing to do with the devil and that his religion is the true one, for he honors his Father. There is much in this: if you have a doctrine that does not honor God, it is a cursed doctrine of devils; if you urge piety while seeking the honor of men, such a doctrine is to be trampled underfoot as a doctrine of devils. Christ wants to say with this saying: How can I

have the devil and lead a doctrine of devils? For whoever honors the Father with his doctrine, his doctrine is certainly right; but that doctrine which does not honor God and takes away his honor is of the devil. — That the Christian religion is the true religion we see from the hymn of praise sung by the holy angels at the birth of Christ.

Luke 2:14: "Glory to God in the highest"; for here it is declared that through Christ the glory is given to God, the glory which Adam robbed him of. Thus a religion is tested as to whether it is the true one, that it takes all glory from man and gives all glory to God.

Romans 3:27: "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith." After Paul has explained the Christian doctrine of justification, he asks, "Where then is the glory or honor of man?" and answers, "It is through the law of faith. For the law of faith, or, what is the same, the gospel, the religion of Christ, takes away all glory from man and gives it to God. Therefore he speaks of the Father of all believers

Romans 4:20: "For he did not doubt the promise of God through unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God." Wherever works are practiced, God is blasphemed and defiled: that is why all religions except the Christian religion are nothing but a defilement of God. All other religions tell us that if you want to go to heaven, you must be pious and good, do good deeds, become holy and so on. We all bring such religion with us into the world, we like it as we are by nature, and the old Adam says yes to it. But it is the devil's lie. Of course Adam was supposed to be blessed in the state of innocence in doing good, but he was not supposed to acquire this blessedness first. At that time it was not said: If you serve me and remain faithful, then you will be saved and go to heaven, but perfect righteousness and holiness were already procured for him, he already possessed the blessedness that came from God's hand. But he could lose this blessedness, and did lose it. And so it is now. God wants to justify and save us through faith in Jesus Christ; salvation itself lies in the Christian religion. This is also a proof that the Christian religion is the true religion, since it gives all glory to God alone in the matter of salvation. It does not build salvation on human activity, but on Christ, in that people are nothing and allow God to give them everything. God then becomes great! Then God becomes all in all. — God made us without us and gave us temporal life; but if we are to have eternal life, we say: We must acquire it for ourselves, and will not let God make eternal life for us. But just as God gives us bodily life without our

doing, so we go forth from God's hand into eternal life. And when we are once in eternal life, we will have nothing to boast about but God's mercy. Therefore, the only true religion now after the fall is that which gives glory to God alone and only dishonor to man.

This thesis has been put forward by setting aside the atheists who say: "There is no God: therefore we need not worship him." But he who believes that there is a supreme God from whom everything comes, admits the thesis. We refrain from those who say: "Do right, fear no one"; for they have omitted the main point. If there were no God, they would be right; but since there is a God, he must be feared, loved and trusted above all things. Such a man may say, "I do not go to church," but the answer to him is, "You are neglecting your greatest duty, which is to God, and when you go to eternity and God asks you, "What did you believe?" and you say, "My principle was: Do right, fear no one," it will be said, “But you did not do right, and you will sink eternally into the abyss of hell”.

That the Christian religion is the true religion, because it alone gives all glory to God, we also see from the words of Paul: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God", 1 Cor. 10:31. The real purpose of man's existence is to give glory to God. The next purpose, of course, is to serve his neighbor; but the goal of this is the glory of God. The heart of man, after the fall, is so disposed that it says: How is it that God is so insistent that all honor be given to him, since he punishes such a demand when it is made by men? But this attitude has its reason in the sinful corruption of man. After the fall, people seek honor that is not due to them. God punishes them for this because they thereby make themselves God. But honor is due to God, it rightly belongs to him, he commands us to give him honor according to his righteousness, holiness and truth; he must do this because otherwise it would be contrary to his nature not to make such a demand. It would also be contrary to our salvation, for no man can be a saved man if he does not give glory to God. That this is so, we see also from the passage already quoted under the Thesis, Isa. 42[:8]: "I, the LORD, that is my name," i.e., I, Jehovah; which name denotes the divine essence. And a translation and explanation of this name is found in Rev. 1:8: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."

Another proof of the truth of the Christian religion is that the main worship of Christians consists of prayer, praise and thanksgiving,

that they will praise and glorify God in eternal life and that the angels praise God at Christ's birth.

No mention is made of the atheists in the Thesis, because they say: "We prove that there is no God, but you prove that there is: so we remain equal." From such talk it is clear that they do not even have what the pagans have. We cannot admit such a justification; for he who does not know that there is a God no longer has that which makes him human.

We could also prove by reason that there is a God; but now it is our intention to argue only with those who admit the existence of a God; for he who admits this, at the same time acknowledges that he must have a religion.

All pagan, philosophical, Mohammedan, Mormon religions are false, because according to all of them man must do this or that in order to acquire salvation; only the Christian religion says the opposite, is opposed to all other religions in the world and has human nature as its enemy. For human nature is blind in its understanding, an enemy of God in its will and a rebel against God in its desires. Man likes to hear it said: You are good by nature, the core is good, you must act according to principles, help your neighbor and love him in order to become pious before God. We Christians don't believe that. Only the hypocrites believe that they go to church, for example, in order to be pious. But we go to church, not actually to serve God, but so that He may serve us there; not to do righteousness, but to receive it from God. Four and a half hundred years [now five hundred years] ago this light arose again through the noble armament of Dr. M. Luther, and where one takes away this light, one takes away a part of Christianity.

The sects say: "We give God the glory; but you must work out your salvation, pray, fight, wrestle", and they despise us, who enter heaven asleep. But their "*glory*", which they shout, is a *glory* of its own. Roman churches also have the words: *Soli Deo gloria*, (glory to God alone), but it is precisely the opposite of what promotes the glory of God that is taught in the Roman church.

The question raised here, whether Christianity as a whole is only above all reason or whether it is contrary to reason, was answered as follows: Christianity, as a whole, has been contrary to reason since the Fall. It outrages every man whom the Holy Spirit does not enlighten, so that he realizes that he has nothing to do to be saved and should have no honor in doing so. Christianity also includes things that are not contrary to reason, but the characteristic of Christianity is always foolishness to human reason.

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Hieronymus Kromayer († 1670) writes: "The ultimate purpose of religion is God's glory. For this is not only the aim of all Christian actions, 1 Cor. 10:31, but also the pinnacle of faith and religion, according to which, as the touchstone, one can test the doctrines of all religions; so that the religion which shakes the honor of God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, who is of the same essence and one throne with him, and the honor of the Holy Spirit through its conversions (*corruptelis*), is not to be considered a true, pure and unadulterated one. For true religion relates everything to the honor of God as its ultimate end. Therefore, when a sharp dispute arose between Christ and the Jews about the truth of doctrine and religion, as to which of the two parties had the right to ascribe it to himself, Christ referred, among other things, to this characteristic of his doctrine, that it was directed to the honor of the heavenly Father, which the Jewish fabrications shake. John 8:49." (*Scrutinium religionum. Lips*. 1673. p. 327. f.)

**Thesis II.** *) ^

*) From here on, the doctrinal discussions were transcribed stenographically by Dr. Dümling and delivered to the standing secretary partly orally and partly in writing.

Since a visible church is an assembly of people who "profess one doctrine and religion", the only true church is the one that gives glory to God alone through all its teachings.

In the first thesis we heard the nature of the true religion. What follows from this? It follows that only that church can be the true one which in all its doctrines gives glory to God alone, because the church is nothing other than an assembly of people who "profess one doctrine and religion". These words: "professing one doctrine and religion", are taken from the Book of Concord. Dietrich's catechism also answers the question: "What are symbols?" thus: "Such books 'which are presented, approved and accepted in the name of the churches that profess one doctrine and religion'." There is no need for a lengthy discussion of this, for this second thesis follows from the first. No one will deny that the visible church has always been an assembly of men professing one doctrine and religion; for the church differs from the state in that it is united by religion, while the state is united by the needs of this life. The state has to provide for the relationship of man to man, but the church for the relationship of man

to the dear God, that is, for religion. We can see this clearly from Holy Scripture.

Ps 26:8: "Lord, I love the place of your house and the place where your glory dwells." The place of worship in the Old Testament was, as every Christian knows, the model for the church. Solomon's temple and the one that was subsequently erected after it was destroyed was the model of the invisible church of God in the New Testament, and of course therefore also of the visible church; for this is no other than the invisible, only viewed in a different relationship. But if the Holy Spirit calls only the temple, where God's glory dwells, a church, how much more must the Church in the New Testament be such, or be the assembly of people among whom God's glory dwells! O a precious truth that we should lock deep into our hearts! All our doings, all our work is against and not for the church if it does not have the glory of God as its goal. Alas, the poor enthusiasts torment themselves and also try to get their people to torment themselves in order to acquire God's grace, righteousness and salvation for themselves, and think that they are working for the glory of God. But this is against the glory of God, for the glory of men, therefore: against the Church. They are not spreading the kingdom of God, but fighting against it. But he who gives all glory to God and seeks to bring man to do the same; and he who recognizes that man is less than nothing; who brings man to fall down before God and as a poor sinful beggar asks and expects everything from God's hand: he builds the Church; for the Church is the place where God's glory dwells. This is the touchstone: if the glory of God does not dwell in our Synod, then it is not God's church, and as much as it diminishes God's glory, so much does it have hideous stains on it; but the more it comes to give glory to God alone, the more it takes on the image of the true church of Jesus Christ. Of course, we must all throw ourselves into the dust when we, especially we preachers, think of how, in our best opinion, we have spoken and done so much that has not only served the glory of God. We have imagined miracles, how serious we are, and yet here and there we have broken off the glory of God and given it to man. Luther also complained about this shortly before his death that it was becoming so difficult for him to hold on to, clearly recognize and apply "by faith alone". What is this other than the complaint: It is becoming so difficult for me to give God all glory and to take all glory from man?

Man fell because he wanted to be like God. It is only by this that he is born again and converted, that he despairs of himself, not hypocritically, but he really feels so, he is a broken vessel, yes, he feels himself as one who would be worthy that God should break him;

but he says, God, have mercy on me! He is not born again who kneels down, prays and struggles in the manner of the enthusiasts in order to acquire salvation — that is the devil's comedy. The good Lord is indeed so merciful that he also has his work there, but he usually only has to help at the hour of death. The sincere among the enthusiasts then throws everything overboard when the ship sinks in the waves; he then thinks nothing of the *camp meeting*, of praying and sliding on his knees; nor does he think: "You can't be in want, you're going to heaven. He throws all this away and says, "It's all garbage." Just as Paul says, "I consider it all garbage compared to the exuberant knowledge of Jesus Christ. This is how it must be with all of us; no one gets to heaven in any other way. What does God ask about the fact that we have become stale? Nothing at all. Nothing at all. Consider how people among the heathen sometimes struggle. In what abstinence, for example, do the Brahmins in the East Indies live! They would rather die than kill a fly, let alone eat beef. In Hindustan, the Indians throw themselves under the Juggernaut's broad-wheeled chariot, which, drawn by many oxen, rolls along like a hellish monster. The poor Hindu throws himself in front of it and lets himself be crushed like a snail, thinking: Now it's off to heaven! What is he worse than a fanatic who rolls in the dust and wants to achieve salvation with it? He is no worse. But will these gentlemen admit that such a one is going to heaven? Well then, do not think of yourself that your industriousness will bring you to heaven. One must not think that the doctrine of serious Christianity suffers thereby; nay, he who is a poor sinner without honor only begins to become really zealous. Those who only hear the doctrine with half ears and therefore have faith in their hearts like foam at the mouth remain godless people. Alas, it is not easy to give God the glory. It costs great struggles if man is to remain in giving glory to God alone. The fact that he fights, struggles and prays here is only to overcome himself, for nothing in the world would be so easy as getting to heaven if we ourselves did not always work so hard against it. We do not need to persuade God to forgive us our sins, for God has already forgiven them. We do not need to reconcile him, for he is already reconciled to us. We do not need to redeem ourselves, for we are already redeemed. But we are the evildoers who must be overcome: our enmity must be put away, our flesh is our trouble. Hence the struggle and the necessity of the struggle, but not because we must first acquire salvation.

The Jesuit Xavier, the hypocrite general, who served the Antichrist from the first day of his Jesuitism until his death and also wanted to acquire

salvation, took it upon himself to show the world what one could and should do to get to heaven. He went into the hospitals to the disgusting sick and sucked the pus out of their ulcers with his own mouth. Then he looked around to see if the people had seen it, and they thought: "This is holiness itself." Does God take us to heaven because we suck up such pus? These are devil's martyrs! — In the fifth century, the Stylites, the pillar saints, were terribly holy. They couldn't fly to heaven and the earth was too bad for them. So they erected large pillars. One of them, a Syrian monk named Simeon, had a forty-foot high pillar erected. He went up to it, sat on top for thirty years, was rained and snowed on, waited for food which people brought him, did not wash or comb his hair, and thought that God should take him, such a crazy creature, to heaven because of this comedy. He did not realize that if God had come, he would have said, "What are you doing up there? You should be down there serving people. Why did I make the wood? But to build houses? Why are you living without shelter? Get down here, you wicked knave!" He was not forty feet closer to heaven, but forty feet lower on the stairway to hell.

But it is hard for us to believe that. When our poor Germans come to America and see how the sects have such a pious appearance, pray, weep and sigh so beautifully, they think that this must be the true church; for in Germany they have of course often seen preachers who were ventriloquists and for whom the main thing was what they collected, their tithes, the interest, generally everything that was attached to and around the parish, and who only talked about the prices of grain, pigs and the like. It is therefore not to be wondered at that the poor people, when they see the pious appearance of an enthusiast, think: "That is quite another man, he wants to save the people, there is the true church." Woe to him who shows no seriousness! But the fact that someone shows such great zeal and is consumed by it does not prove that he is a true prophet. Besides, he can take all honor from God. Then he is lost, even if he had preached himself half to death every day for thirty years. He would have poured his water into a barrel full of holes. Such a man has already lost his reward on earth. And what is it? That the people said, "This is a holy man!”

God's commandment requires us to recognize that he is our God. That is the first commandment. Whoever does not enter the kingdom of God through this door will not enter. It is all hypocrisy and miserable comedy if one wants to fulfill the other commandments and does not fulfill the first. That is why Luther, in his clear divine understanding of the Word of God, repeated the first commandment in

every commandment: "We should fear and love God", so that we do not forget that the second to tenth commandments cannot be fulfilled without the first. We must come to the point where we give God all the glory and make him our God. That is why at the top of all the commandments is: "I am the Lord your God." This is why Luther so often says: "In the first commandment lies the whole gospel, the whole faith", because now, after the fall into sin, we make God our God again through faith alone. All moral teaching takes away the glory of God, but faith gives it to him; and these are only good works if I do them because I think: Should I not serve my God? But who would think: I must serve God so that I may go to heaven, he would want to keep the last nine commandments while leaving out the first. God knows very well why he made this commandment the first. We must go through this door, otherwise we are rejected by God.

Rev 14:6-7: "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him." We Lutherans are firmly convinced that this prophecy is aimed at Luther and the Reformation. But because it is a prophecy, we cannot, of course, absolutely demand that others believe it. This is not part of the articles of faith. But everyone must admit to us: The renewal of the Church is to consist in the coming of an angel, a messenger of God, who will say: Fear God and give him glory! So it is important that we give him all the glory, that is how the Reformation happened. That is in this prophecy. No one can deny it.

John 5:44: "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?." So the Savior does not recognize as a believer those who take glory from others, because faith is nothing other than giving all glory to God alone: Giving all glory to God alone. For faith is not sour and sweet feelings, which is what the enthusiasts make faith to be, but it is faith that I give all glory to God alone, that is, that I take everything from God and appropriate it for myself, just as John 1 says: "But how many received him." Receive is the synonymous word for believe. If a person is so far gone that he does not want to do anything to make God his debtor, but that he himself wants to be the debtor for eternity and take everything from God, then he gives God the glory and is alone a true Christian.

When it says in Philippians 2:12: "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling", the Holy Spirit continues and gives the reason.

One would think that this would follow: For man must will and accomplish his conversion; but the Holy Spirit continues differently, namely: "For it is God who works in you both to will and to do, according to his good pleasure." The working out of our salvation on our part is such that we get deeper and deeper into the dung heap with our work.

Luther writes: "Christians are commanded to do nothing but preach and confess the glory of God, that is, our impossibility and God's possibility (Matthew 19:26), as Christ says here." ("Who then can be saved?" the apostles exclaim; but Jesus answers: "With men it is impossible; but with God all things are possible."). The true Christian must recognize that it would always be impossible for him to achieve salvation, but that with God all things are possible. If a person believes this, he is helped. As soon as I trust God to give me salvation, He has already given it to me. God is a sea that is always overflowing; he is only looking for an empty place). "and", Luther continues, "to put out of the way all annoyances that can elevate or inflate the free will." (XVIII, 1328 [St. L. 18, 1078; AE 32, 156]) The whole duty of man, then, according to Luther, is to fight to the death with himself and with others to prevent free will, as the evil hound of hell that will not let us into heaven, from coming forth again. Nothing of free will should be left in our mouths and hearts, but God alone has free will and we should let him give us what he has intended for us.

John Gerard writes: "Any fellowship that adheres to false doctrines and stubbornly defends them, which attack God's honor, is not a true church, even if it gives them a good appearance with distorted and misunderstood scriptural passages." (*Disputation. theol. Jenae* 1655. p. 3.) Whatever one teaches may have a good appearance; as soon as the honor of God is attacked thereby, the church is false. Therefore all churches, except our Lutheran, are false at present. This is not to say that all communities which call themselves Lutheran are true churches, but only those which, with Luther, give all glory to God alone and take all glory from man.

Consider also how God's honor is diminished by the slightest false teaching. If a king were to make several assertions before his assembled subjects, and one were to say, "I do not believe this," and another, "I do not believe that," they would not fare well; but if man, this worm of sin, were to make God a liar and say, "It is written in the Bible, but I cannot believe it," that would be a small matter. But it is an abomination. One may only take one word in Holy Scripture differently from what it says if Scripture itself requires it. When the Savior says, "Tell Herod that

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fox," [Luke 13:32] the Scripture itself tells us that the word "fox" is not to be taken here in its proper sense; for Herod was not a four-footed beast that goes after fowls, but a king. Here Scripture itself compels us to take the word "fox" in a different sense than it reads. But how do the Calvinists do it? The Savior says in Holy Communion: "This is my body; this is my blood." Calvinists say that this cannot be taken as it reads. Why not? They do not explain the words by the Bible, but only say: "Well, who can believe this?" From this it is clear that they do not want to believe God's Word. They say: "Reason does not suffer it." But that does not mean giving God the glory, but dishonoring God! And we should just stand by and watch? unite with them? reject the Word of God with them? Never and never again!

On this point the Iowans sin terribly by admitting that our Lutheran doctrine of Sunday is indeed taken from God's Word, but nevertheless declare it to be one from which we may depart. They want to comfort us by saying that it is the only one they exclude; but Luther rightly says: Whoever denies God in one word has denied him completely. With them the church is to decide on doctrine in a completely Romanizing manner.

**Thesis III.** ^

Only through the doctrine of the Lutheran Church is all glory given to God alone; this is evident, among other things, from its doctrine:

1. of the Word of God;
2. the cause of sin, death, hell and damnation;
3. of divine providence;
4. of the general will of God's grace; [1874 Western]
5. of the reconciliation and redemption of the human race; [1874 Western]
6. the justification of the sinner by grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ without merit of works; [1875 Western]
7. the necessity of regeneration and sanctification; [1875 Western]
8. the foundation, validity, power and immutability of the means of grace; [1876 Western]
9. of conversion; [1876 Western]
10. of the invocation and worship of God; [1882 Western]
11. obedience to men in matters of faith and conscience; [1883, 1885, 1886 Western]
12. the election of grace. [1877, 1879, 1880 Western]

First of all, this thesis states: Only through the teaching of the Lutheran Church is all glory given to God alone. Before we look for proof of this through a series of

doctrines, let us first give some evidence that our forefathers were also vividly aware of this, not only that the church must have this quality, but that the Evangelical Lutheran Church really has this quality.

Luther writes about this: "If the papists boast and shout for a long time: Fathers, Fathers!, Church, Church! etc., but because they not only do not preach the Gospel, but also persecute and blaspheme and only want to maintain their splendor, and do not ask anything about Christ's good deeds and honor, nor about the salvation of poor souls, their boasting helps them as little as the false apostles helped their boasting. Again, I know for a fact that we do not preach to please men, but God, that is, that we attribute everything to God alone, and would gladly have all the world recognize the unspeakable grace and good deed that the merciful Father has shown us in Christ Jesus our Lord. All our teaching, preaching and writing is directed to this, and the world becomes hostile to us precisely because we give all glory and praise to God and leave nothing to the world. I still remember well what Dr. Staupitz, who was the Augustinian vicar, said to me at the beginning, when the Gospel came forth: 'That comforts me most of all,' he said, 'that this teaching of the Gospel, which is now coming to light again, gives all honor and praise to God alone and nothing to men; but now it is ever in the day and evident that one can never again ascribe too much honor, goodness, etc. to our Lord God. Thus he comforted me at that time, and it is also the truth that the teaching of the Gospel denies all honor, wisdom, and righteousness to men and ascribes them to the one and true Creator, who makes everything out of nothing. Now it is much safer to attribute too much to our Lord God (although one can never attribute too much to him) than to attribute too much to men. For I can confidently and cheerfully say: Let it be so that the Church, St. Augustine and other teachers, and St. Peter, Apollo, and even an angel from heaven teach differently, yet my teaching is such that it teaches the one God alone to be purely recognized and rightly served, and condemns all men in their wisdom and righteousness. I cannot err or sin in this, for I give to both God and man what is due and proper to each by right." (On Gal. 1:11-12. VIII., 1678. f. [St. L. 9, 96-97; AE 26, 66])

Consider this: If the sects and the false Lutherans do not become enemies of us because we give glory to God alone, then our dishonor is nothing. That must be the disgrace, that we alone give glory to God; as the ancient Fathers already said: It is not

the suffering that makes the martyr, but the cause of the suffering. So we also say: You are not a good Lutheran because your opponents call you a Lutheran, but because they revile you for the sake of the things by which alone you give all glory to God and take all glory from man. This was also Luther's dishonor. "Alas," said the enemies, "he puts all good works to shame, is an enemy of piety, says that God does everything." Luther replied: "Oh, that's so good for me, then it's still right with me, because that's what matters."

How gracious and kind our God is to our Synod, to have led it in such a way that we have been given the opportunity to go into this subject in more detail. This is the crux of the matter, if we want to call ourselves Lutherans, that we give God all the glory and take all the glory from man. That is why Paul was so blasphemed. Everywhere the false apostles said: "Oh, Paul only knows how to talk about faith, we are different people. We say: Holy, holy one must be and keep the law of Moses, that is a religion; but the wretched Paul always and only calls out: Christ, faith, grace." This is how these hopeless false prophets deceived entire churches. When Paul returned, he saw that they had all fallen away from Christ and his grace. They were ashamed of the gospel, they were ashamed of the crucified One; they were ashamed to say, "We are lost and damned sinners, we live by grace alone. Yes, say the children of the world about Christians, they are such poor sinners, they may lead a good life! But let's just let the world revile and scold us like that. That is our greatest honor. But when the world begins to say: "You have to respect them, they are pious", that is very dubious praise. But if it is hostile to us because we insist on grace and always say: Rely only on the Word, rely only on Holy Communion; if they despise us as miserable people because of this, then we should say: Well, that is the right honor, God is honored there, let them kick us into the dunghill; if they only say: "That's true: They know a lot about the dear God," we don't want to take credit for that either.

When Luther first preached the faith, a terrible unrest arose and Dr. Staupitz became anxious. But that was his consolation, as is said in the above testimony of Luther, that he knew that through this teaching all glory would be given to God. There, he thought, one can already say that God takes care of the matter himself, since it is about his honor. When Melanchthon said: "Yes, for God's sake, what is to happen now? The emperor has issued such a terrible edict"; then Luther said: "That is none of my business, it is God's business. If he wants to be thrown off the throne, I cannot keep him on it." Then he made the emperor angry, and the pope cast the ban, and the mob raged and rioted. He lay down in bed and slept peacefully. "I have not," he said, "my honor to save; I have not sought it. So if any

disgrace comes of it, the good Lord may ascribe it to himself." One must be able to speak like this, but no humanity! No wonder the unbelievers do not want to stick to a certain doctrine; for they are not firmly convinced of any doctrine. They would be fools if they wanted to fight for a doctrine that they do not know to be true. "Oh, just keep calm," they say, "and be peaceful, in eternity we will see who is right." Of course they can remain calm, but anyone who knows that a doctrine is the Word of God starts a war with the whole world. And then he goes to bed, and the good Lord may settle the matter completely. God is not a carpenter, shoemaker and the like; he is a creator, and a creator can need nothing at all if he wants to make something. He must have nothing; then he can make something. God did this not only 6000 years ago, but also today. As soon as man says: "I want to do something", God says: "I can use nothing; no material, nothing, nothing, that is my substance. God is everything in everything, and we are merely a thing that has become nothing, i.e. we are nothing except in God. The apostle therefore says: "In him we live, move, and have our being." Let no one be afraid for God's sake when he sees Lutheran doctrines, e.g. of conversion and election of grace, in which everything is attributed to God, if only he knows that in them all glory is given to God and all glory is taken away from man. This is the touchstone.

Gerhard also writes: "That this judgment of Staupitz did not flow from preference, but from the source of truth, is revealed by the matter itself." (*Confessio cath. fol*. 67.) Gerhard also reports that Emperor Ferdinand I repeatedly said: "He likes two things about the Lutherans, firstly that they give God the glory in everything they do, and secondly that in their churches they regard the government honorably and preach accordingly." (op. cit.)

Hoe von Hoenegg († 1645) writes: "Since in the papacy the honor due to God alone has been given to others, Luther also wanted and should save God's honor by saying with a loud voice: Give glory to God! (Rev. 14.) ... And this was done through the ministry of our Luther, who brought back to the church the honor due to God and the way of worshipping him, not by the sword but by the word, not by persecution but by preaching." (*Commentary, in Joh. Apocalypsin. Lips. et Francof. 1671. p. I*., fol. 540.)

Joh. Christoph Köcher cites the following as the 15th proof "that the Evangelical Lutheran religion is a true, perfect and blessed religion": "because it has the glory of the Most High God as its main end and raises, makes known and

spreads this by means of its entire doctrines and moral rules." (Convincing Instruction of the Truth etc. of the Evangelical Lutheran Religion. Jena 1755. p. 252).

Hieronymus Kromayer writes: "No religion has such great power as the Lutheran religion, in that it not only relates everything to God's glory, but also alone can calm the conscience and give a life-giving consolation. As far as the former is concerned, this could be demonstrated in all the articles of faith if we were to go through them one by one. Thus, in the article on Holy Scripture, we give God the glory of goodness, that He has revealed to us in it the whole counsel of our salvation, and the glory of wisdom, that He has clearly presented the most difficult matters in it. In the article of Christ, the glory of mercy, that he had mercy on us all and bestowed an admirable means of restoring salvation in his Son. In the article on creation and the image of God, the glory of power and holiness, that he created man just, holy and upright in his likeness. In the article on free will, the honor of grace, that in the conversion of man He alone gives both the willing and the doing. In the doctrine of the law and justification, that since no one can perfectly fulfill the law, he justifies us by faith; which doctrine, as it abolishes all honor in man, Eph. 2:8-9, so it gives it to God alone, Rom. 4:2." (*Scrut. relig*. p. 334.)

How terribly God avenges it, if one robs him of the honor in any doctrine or does not want to give it, is confirmed by the following sad, warning examples. At the St. Louis District Pastoral Conference held at St. Charles, Mo. in 1869, there was one present who fought tooth and nail against the Lutheran doctrine of election by grace and did not participate in the vote. Not long afterwards, he fell away to the papacy. The Methodist [William] Nast claims to have penetrated to perfect sanctification, and as proof of this he states that he has given up smoking. Isn't it as if the devil were leading them by a fool's rope? But that is how it must be: Whoever abandons true holiness must fall for such ridiculous things and think: Now I am a made saint.

To the question as to how it is that in the heading of the theses it is said that it should be proved that the doctrine of the Lutheran Church is the only true one, since in the second thesis it is said: "only that church is the true one which through all its doctrines gives glory to God alone", the answer was given: According to the matter, it is one thing whether it is proved that the doctrine of the Lutheran Church is the only true one, or that the Lutheran Church is the only true visible Church.

### 1. The Doctrine of the Word of God. ^

Now as to 1. the doctrine of the Word of God, it is well known

that the modern theologians, who also claim to be believers, maintain that the doctrine of the inspiration of Holy Scripture is not yet fixed, i.e., not yet established, by the Lutheran Church, as they express it; this article is still suspended. In the seventeenth century, it is said, a system of the doctrine of the inspiration of Holy Scripture was put together, but it had gone too far, and no one could now accept that doctrine of the inspiration of Holy Scripture; it was reserved for our time to establish the right doctrine on this point; it had not occurred to Luther to teach about Holy Scripture in the way that, for example, a Quenstedt, a Gerhard, a Calov, and other theologians of the seventeenth century did. But only this much is true of this: Luther did not, indeed, leave a scientific system of this doctrine; but if you only read how he speaks of the Scriptures, you will see that he had quite the same faith which Gerhard and Quenstedt and Calov and other famous theologians of our church profess. "Yes," they say, "at least the doctrine does not appear in the symbolic books." That is why the modern theologians want to be considered good Lutheran theologians, even though they do not teach that all Scripture is inspired by God. "Yes," they say, "the Word of God is indeed in the Bible, but there is also much in it that does not necessarily belong to Christianity; the sacred writers may have made a mistake." If this is the case, then man must seek out what is God's Word, then man must stand above the Scriptures, he must decide. For when he decides, he is above God, at least above His Word. But all this is untrue. Thus we teach in the

Apology of the Augsburg Confession: "It is truly a wonder that the adversaries can be so blind and fail to see so many clear passages which clearly declare that we are justified by faith and not by works. What do these poor people think? Do they think that the Scriptures so often speak so clearly for no reason? Do they think that the Holy Spirit does not speak his word with certainty and deliberation, or that he does not know what he is saying?" ("*Num arbitrantur, excidisse Spiritui Sancto non animadvertenti has voces*?" Do they think that the Holy Spirit) (Article IV, par. 107 f.; [*Triglotta* p. 153])

In these words of the Apology, therefore, it is said that one should well consider, when reading the Scriptures, that the Holy Spirit inspired these Scriptures, and that He has set all things well "deliberately". Here our Church confesses that every word, every phrase, every repetition of any word, every abbreviation, the whole way of speaking has its origin in the Holy Spirit, who has inspired everything, not only the truths, not only the meaning, not only the "what", but also the "how", who has chosen the words that were necessary so that the mind of God would really be rightly revealed to us. Every Christian knows that this

is the teaching of Holy Scripture itself. The Savior himself tells the apostles that the Holy Spirit will give them "how" and "what" they should preach. (Matt. 10:19-20.) The apostle also speaks "with words which the Holy Spirit teaches" (1 Cor. 2:13.), and the prophets without exception say when they begin to write: The Lord speaks! And when the New Testament quotes from the Old Testament, it says: as the Holy Spirit speaks (Mark 12:36, Acts 1:16, 28:25, etc.), and the apostle Paul testifies that all Scripture is inspired by God. He does not say: the Word of God, but: all Scripture. Just as holy men have written it, so the Holy Spirit has inspired it. That our Lutheran Church believed and confessed this as early as the 16th century is proved, among other things, by the passage quoted from the Apology, and whoever commits himself to the symbolic books and allows himself to be installed in office and does not believe this doctrine is a wretched scoundrel. The Iowans, of course, help themselves in this by saying that only what is contained in the symbolic books with an openly expressed intention of confession must be binding, that alone belongs to the confession; but no one is bound by what is incidentally included therein. In this way, of course, they can throw most of the Confessions overboard. Our Lutheran Church, however, has committed itself to its Confessions as it reads from beginning to end, and this passage, which reads in Latin: "*Num arbitrantur excidisse Spiritui Sancto non animadvertenti has voces*?", also belongs there. (i.e. do they think that these words escaped the Holy Spirit without notice?) But this could not be said if it were not shown that it is the Holy Spirit Himself who is speaking. It is not Isaiah, not Moses, not Paul who speaks, but it is the Holy Spirit who speaks. It may well happen to a human being that an expression that is not quite right escapes him, but this does not happen to the Holy Spirit. In short, this passage shows that the doctrine of the inspiration of Holy Scripture, as it was presented by our old dogmatists in the seventeenth century, already lies in the symbolic books. No special article was written about it because the papists did not deny this doctrine at that time, nor do they deny it today. The Augsburg Confession was to contain, first of all, those doctrines by which the Lutheran Church proved that it was the old Catholic Church and not a new one, and secondly, those doctrines which were denied by those then present; but in what they agreed was not first stated. This is the reason why we have no special article on the inspiration of Holy Scripture in the Augsburg Confession. But the doctrine of inspiration is contained in its highest rigor in the Apology.

Luther, of whom it is said that he already had a freer view than the later theologians, writes: "I beg and warn

faithfully every pious Christian not to be offended by the simple-minded speech and history that he will often encounter (in the Old Testament), but not to doubt how badly it can always be seen to be merely the word, work, judgment and history of the high divine majesty, power and wisdom." (Preface to the Old Testament. [AE 35, 236]) This was Luther's belief: every word of Holy Scripture is a word of the high majesty of God. Many a word in the Old Testament appeared contemptible to his reason, but he blindly rebukes his reason and says: "God forbid that I should judge this holy book of God according to my reason!

He says: "There is more and greater value in one letter, indeed in a few words of Scripture, than in heaven and earth. Therefore we cannot suffer them to be moved even in the least." (Gal. 5:10, W[1] VIII, 2661 [AE 27, 41]) There is therefore more to a letter and a few verses of Scripture than to heaven and earth. A tittle is understood to be a small tick or dot. A tittle would be, for example, the dot above the i or the little ring above the u. For the Hebrew and Greek languages also have little ticks in addition to the characters, and Luther says that a single such tittle in the Bible is more important than heaven and earth. For they often matter immeasurably. In the fourth century, for example, there was a great dispute between true and false Christians as to whether Christ was *ομοούσιος* or only *ομοιούσιος* to the Father. The question then arose as to whether a small *ι* (*iota*) should be added to the word *ομοούσιος* or left out, and in Greek an *ι* is just a small dash. If you put it in, a lot was changed. Without *ι*, the word *ομοούσιος* means in German: the same essence with the Father, but with the *ι ομοιούσιος* means similar in nature to the Father. The godless Arians said ομοιούσιος*;* only the little dash, they said, put it in, and we are satisfied. But the others, the true Christians, said: The little line should not go in. Many of them also had to leave their heads because of this little line. Finally,

Luther: "Far be it from me that there should be one single letter in Paul which the whole universal church should not follow and hold." (W[1] XIX, 22; AE 36, 25) The modern theologians say: Of course there are many letters which contain errors, defects, mistakes, some historical, some astronomical, some physical, some mathematical, some chronological. They want to find errors everywhere, but the Word of God always remains firm. It is a trick of the devil! It cannot be said that these men are aware that they are overturning the whole Word of God, but they do not suspect that the devil is behind them and is doing this to them; for if the Christian cannot say, "Every letter is the word of God," he can perhaps say at the hour of death,

45 [1873 Western District essay by Walther]

"It is well said that we are justified by faith; it is well said: Christ is my life; but — it could also be otherwise. If he does not know that he can rely on every word, he is lost. So also says

Gerhard: "In the article on Holy Scripture we (Lutherans) give God the glory of goodness, that He has revealed to us in Scripture all His counsel concerning our salvation, and the glory of wisdom, that He, as the Creator of sense and language, has spoken clearly and distinctly, therefore we also revere the Holy Scriptures as the decrees of Almighty God and the King of kings, and praise the majesty of them." (*Confess. cath. fol.* 67. f.)

In two main ways, then, we Lutherans prove that we also give God all glory in the doctrine of Holy Scripture. First, we say: All that man needs to know for his salvation is in Scripture; we need nothing more. [i.e. not "Tradition"] Secondly, we say: Holy Scripture is such that every man can take everything from Scripture itself in order to become certain of his salvation. He needs no pope, no council, no church, no pastor — in short, no man. He can take everything from it himself. So we give God the glory and say: My God, I rely on you alone, not because my preacher preaches like this, not because of the Synod, but because I have recognized it myself from your dear, precious Word. I am dependent only on you, the great God. But as soon as one denies the clarity of Scripture, as the papists and enthusiasts do, one deprives God of honor and declares to the dear God: There, dear God, you have given men a revelation from which they will not be shy and wise. But if God had given His Word in such a way that men first had to have scholars to interpret it, he would not be a wise God; for a revelation to men which reveals nothing to man is an absurdity.

The following testimonies show what, first, the papists and, second, the Calvinists teach against this.

Gerhard writes: "Whoever is disrespectful of the public notices posted by the authorities is judged to insult the honor of the authorities themselves; in the same way, whoever thinks and speaks disrespectfully of the sacred Scriptures, those sacred public tablets of divine truth, is rightly judged to diminish the honor of God himself. But the popes do this in many ways:

"1. by making the authority of Scripture dependent on the authority of the church alone". (The Church is thus to unlock the meaning, otherwise it will never be explored. How terrible! The good Lord would give us His Word and only a certain number of people would have the key to it. They call them the church. This so-called church is a robber of God, takes the honor from God that he has given us His Word, and that

we owe this good deed to him and not to the church. — Gerhard continues):

"2. By appending to the certain and immovable Word of God presented in the canonical books the apocryphal writings, which contain uncertain and false assertions". (This is very important. We also have the apocrypha in our Bible book, e.g. Jesus Sirach, the Wisdom of Solomon, the Maccabees, etc.; but it is stated above that they are not to be regarded as Holy Scripture, but only to be read carefully. From them we can read what the Jewish church believed after the appearance of the prophets up to the time of Christ, which otherwise the common people would not know at all. But they also contain many falsehoods. It says that the witch of Endor brought the real Samuel out of death, that a certain Rhazis performed a great heroic deed with his suicide, that Judas Maccabeus did well to send two thousand drachmas to Jerusalem as a sin offering, and that it was a good and holy opinion to pray for the dead that their sins might be forgiven. Of course, when the Roman priests read about the 2,000 drachmas, they thought: "This is a good passage, we must not delete it from the Bible," and they looked at the 2,000 drachmas with one eye and at purgatory with the other. The Book of Tobiah then also condones shameful sorcery. Even though the Apocrypha contains a lot of valuable things, they are still very bad crumbs. The Roman Church, however, insists as much on the acceptance of the Apocrypha as on that of the Book of Isaiah or the Psalter, because it thinks it can prove purgatory, its sorcery at their consecration and the like; whereas anyone who knows history knows that the Apocrypha was never recognized by the Church of the Old Covenant. We have received the Old Testament from the Jewish orthodox Church, but in this Testament there is no Jesus Sirach, no Book of Tobiah, no Books of the Maccabees, and so on. The Old Testament church already had these books, but they were not recognized as divine books. They were not originally written in Hebrew, but in Greek, and some of them only exist in Latin. In short, the papists are lying when they say that the Apocrypha is as good a word of God as the other books. We do not recognize them and give God the glory by not imputing to him books that he did not make. For it is a great ungodliness for someone to write a book and put another name on the title, such as "Luther". But it is a small sin to write on it: "This book is from God", when it was written by men from their own spirit. — Gerhard writes further:)

"3. By urging the Church to accept the traditions with the same reverence as the written Word of God" [Cp. to Prof. Joel Biermann]. (The

papists decided in the Tridentine Council that the traditions must be treated with quite the same reverence as the Word of God. For they also call their traditions the Word of God, and while they make a distinction between the written and unwritten Word, they claim that both are equally divine and holy. In this, that they make the uncertain traditions equal to the Word of God, consists the abominable theft of God. — Gerhard continues:)

"4. By denying the perspicuity of Scripture"; (This they do against God's honor. For if God wrote an obscure book, he would either have to be so foolish that he would give the book while no one should understand it — thus only wanting to monkey with people — or he would have to be as clumsy as we are, who often write and speak something that no one understands. By denying the clarity of Scripture, wisdom is denied to God. Therefore the doctrine that the Scriptures are dark is a blasphemous doctrine. — Gerhard writes further:)

"5. By denying the perfection of Scripture". (The papists say that there must be other things besides Scripture. But if Scripture, which God made, were an imperfect work, then God would no longer be God. — Gerhard writes further:)

"6. By obstinately denying that Scripture is the only guide of doctrines and doctrinal disputes in the Church". (They say that not only the Bible, but also the decrees of the Conciliar, the decisions of the Church, and what we find in the Fathers of the Church in general, are the guide. — Gerhard continues:)

"7. By impudently denying that the Holy Spirit can be a judge through the Holy Scriptures". (The Lutherans have always held against the papists that the Scriptures, and not the pope and the councils, are the judge. They ridiculed this and said: "Your judge does not even have a mouth and yet he can speak; he is a mute judge of paper; the printers and typesetters make him out of printer's ink! But this is blasphemous mockery! When we call Holy Scripture a judge, this is a figurative way of speaking, i.e. we do not mean to say that the Bible is a person, but that it judges just like a person; for the Holy Spirit speaks through the Scriptures. To deny this to Holy Scripture is to deny it to God Himself. — Gerhard writes further)

"8. By keeping the laity from reading the Scriptures". (This is horrible and terrible! For in this way the Christians did not actually have God's Word at all, but God would have given His Word to the priests and clergy, and the poor laity would then have to stand before their clergy, open their mouths and ask: What has the good Lord written? They would have to rely on the priests instead of God's Word. — Gerhard finally writes:)

"9. By desecrating the Holy Scriptures with insults and blasphemous speech." (*Diputatt*. p. 24. ff.) (They say, for example: "The Bible is a heretical book; for all heresies have arisen from the Bible." [Cp. Piepkorn and Biermann speak like this: “biblicism” produces “Jehovah’s Witnesses”, “Mormons”] Of course, if they mean that our Lutheran Church originated from the Bible, they are right. The Pope is so hostile to the Bible because the Bible reveals all his tricks — and we have discovered them. Then they say: "The Bible is a dead letter", or: "It is a waxy nose that can sometimes be made wide, sometimes long, sometimes an eagle's nose, sometimes something else; shy people can do what they like with it." They say this in their blindness. The simplest person, who has perhaps never learned to read in his life, let alone write and count, if he is a true Christian and is presented with a false doctrine that he must believe, asks: "Where is this written?" If you then read a passage to him, he will be able to say with great ease: "You lied; the doctrine is not there." Scripture is so clear that there are clear passages for everything a Christian must believe in order to attain salvation.)

Gerhard did not mention the one thing by which the papists also attack God's honor, namely that they not only consider their Vulgate equal to the original text, but even place it above it. In the Roman Church it is not permitted to appeal against the Vulgate to the Hebrew and Greek text, which comes from the sacred writers. They say that the Pope made sure that the Latin Bible was not falsified, but that they don't know very well what the situation is with the Hebrew and Greek texts. While we Lutherans hold our Lutheran translation of the Bible in the highest esteem because it renders so wonderfully in German what is in the original text, if a dispute arose and someone wanted to say: "Luther did not express himself correctly here or there", we would not say: "What Luther wrote is written". Oh no, Luther was not a prophet and apostle who could not have been mistaken. [Against Prof. Mackenzie] "Well then," we would say, "let's go back to the original text!" We therefore place Luther's translation below the original text. This has the advantage. Luther's translation must be checked and corrected according to the original text.

What do the Calvinists now say with regard to the doctrine of Holy Scripture?

John Gerhard writes: "So far it has been shown how God's honor with regard to his nature and attributes is attacked by the Calvinist falsifications, it is now still to be shown how they attack it with regard to the divine word. Although they want to be regarded as maintaining a complete consensus with our churches in the article of Holy Scripture and fighting the papal enemies of Scripture with us with united forces, the matter itself shows that

they are also rightly accused in this respect of attacking and shaking the honor of Scripture and consequently of God himself."

The United Churches say: "You Lutherans are real disturbers of the peace, you do not want to unite with the Reformed, since they are in agreement with you, for example in the doctrine of the Word of God." Yes, God would that it were so! But this is precisely where they disagree with us. When we say: "The Bible is God's Word, literally inspired by the Holy Spirit", they say yes to this. But if we say, applying this teaching: "Behold, the Savior says: This is my body; this is my blood; here it is clearly written, you cannot ignore it," they make excuses. Then it comes out that they do not believe that these are words of divine wisdom. (See what has already been said about this in Thesis II under the quotation from Gerhard). Gerhard continues:

"1. To the apostles, the writers of the Holy Spirit, the ministerial causes of the Scriptures of the New Testament, some of their community ascribe errors and oversights (*lapsus*). Conrad Vorst published a book with Socinus's name suppressed, and recommended it by a preface, in which, p. 104, it is asserted of the evangelists and apostles that 'it may have happened that they sometimes' (in interpreting some passages of the Old Testament and in explaining the proofs derived from them) 'erred insignificantly (*leviter*)'. He also writes on p. 15: 'Although in some small matters, which are of no importance (since it is possible that one may have retained the truth of such matters better than the other), they may have written somewhat or very differently from one another.' The same writes in his reply to Dontelock's arguments: 'He could teach much of this kind from Calvinistic teachers', by which they express the opinion: 'That the writers of the New Testament have committed errors of memory, erred in trifling matters, quoted many an inappropriate thing' ... Francis Junius disputes in the first book of the Parallels p. 1053: 'Luke inserted the name Cainan into the genealogy and thus added something to the history for the sake of the assumed opinion of the people. Although we' (he says) 'admit that this was wrong in the matter, one could still have the opinion that it was so, indeed, the people had this opinion, and he took account of this generally accepted opinion among the people, etc.'. Luke knew that this was wrong, but he knew that it was of such a kind that it was only contrary to the truth of a historical matter, but not to the catholic faith."

The Calvinists do just like the modern theologians. They all say that it is quite possible that an evangelist might have believed that a passage from the prophets was a prophecy of Christ, but that he might also have been mistaken; the doctrine was correct, but that it was an error for him to believe that this or that passage dealt with Christ or a matter of the new covenant.

50 [1873 Western District essay by Walther]

The modern theologians now usually say that the Bible is not a book from which one can learn natural science, astronomy, mathematics, geography; the Bible was not given for this purpose; therefore it could well have happened that in these points false things had come into the Bible. Ah, if we had such a Bible, the devil could say in every temptation: "You cannot rely on it." No, if we cannot believe that the whole Bible is God's Word — it is boldly spoken, but it is true — then we can confidently put the Bible in the furnace. It would help us nothing, nothing at all. We can only use such a Word of God in which we do not have to search out the Word of God ourselves, but of which God himself says: "This is my Word!" But if he had to say: "You have sense, you are a clever man, you seek it out!" — then I would rely on myself and not on the Word. — Gerhard also writes:

"2. Nor do we see how it agrees with the authority and credibility of Scripture that Calvin, in his *Institutes*, Book 4, chapter 17, § 23, calls those 'hair splitters' (*aucupes syllabarum*) who in the words of the Lord's Supper insist on the words as they read (*Disputp.* p. 125. 569. f.).

For the Lutherans, Scripture is the sole norm, rule and guideline of all faith and life. Catholics, on the other hand, place tradition and the authority of the Church above Scripture. The Jesuit Kratzer said to Heilbronner at the Colloquium in Regensburg: "May the Holy Spirit himself step forward and speak: 'You, Kratzer, are wrong; Heilbronner, you have won the victory', then I will immediately step over into your path." He thus declared that the Holy Spirit did not speak through the Scriptures, but had to come personally and give this statement as a direct revelation. He therefore did not recognize the authority of Holy Scripture, so that it alone is the judge and norm of all teaching.

[Walther's grand paragraph:]

Above all, we must recognize this in a very real way: If we really want to give God all the glory and thus have the mark of being true Lutherans, let us hold fast to the pure old doctrine of the inspiration of Holy Scripture by the Holy Spirit, even according to the words. If we give way in this in the slightest degree, we have gambled it away and everything else we teach that is good has lost its real value. For as soon as I deny the foundation, what good will it do me to keep what is built upon it? So if we had all the doctrines of the Lutheran Church, it would be nothing if we let ourselves be deprived of the one doctrine that the Bible is inspired by God word for word. [i.e. "verbal inspiration". Against Westfield House essays] If the Bible is not inspired by God, then the Lutheran doctrine is not the right one either; for the Lutheran doctrine is nothing more than a repetition of what is written in the Bible. Hence it is that we can say so confidently and cheerfully: "You are all wrong,

we alone are right." Not because we think we are clever people; no, we do not consider ourselves so clever and learned, but, on the contrary, we like to believe that other people are more clever and learned; but that we say so confidently and cheerfully to the whole world and to all sects, "You are wrong, we are right," is because we have only accepted what is written in the Bible. If we were to say, "Perhaps we too are wrong," we would be attacking God's honor, as if he had perhaps deceived us after all. No, as serious as we are about giving God alone the glory, we must remain serious about our confession: We have the pure doctrine, all others are in error, blindness and darkness. But we can say this without arrogance, because we know: Lutheran doctrine is nothing but that which is contained in the very clear passages of Holy Scripture. The Lutheran Church must not allow itself to be determined by reason, it must not allow itself to be determined by the heart — which may feel as it pleases.

It has never allowed itself to be determined by the Church Fathers. It accepts what the Church Fathers teach with the Bible. But it has also never allowed itself to be determined by the whole Church if it taught differently from the Bible. Or, if someone came and said that he had new revelations, that would not help; we would answer him: "That's what the Bible says." Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians might come, or Spiritualists might raise all the dead, or at least conjure them up — we laugh at that silly stuff; though we would like to weep over it too. But we laugh in so far as it makes no impression on us. We are not afraid that we are wrong, like the poor sectarians who waver to and fro. Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians, they all tremble and hesitate. Why then? Simply because they do not trust the Bible. We Lutherans trust the Bible; what it says is settled. Methodists, Papists, Baptists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Spiritualists, Shakers and Quakers — they may come; just stop your lumpishness about us: we have our Bible. With it we will confidently lie down on our deathbed. There you will stand and say: "The Lutherans were right. They did not miss the right path because they made the Word of God the lamp of their feet and the light of their paths." Yes, it all depends on us becoming firm in it, or we are lost. The devil is already knocking in our Synod through the Iowans: we should give up this jewel, we should, as Luther says, sit on the monkey's tail and say: "We can no longer use the 17th century doctrine of inspiration in this time." Alas, it is not merely the teaching of the 17th or 16th century, but that of the apostles and prophets themselves. If they had added their own to the word, they would have been the most God-forgetful rascals, which

is terrible to say; for they would then have had to say: "This is what the good Lord means"; but they say: "Thus saith the Lord, thus saith the Holy Ghost." And the Savior himself adds to a passage he quotes: "And the Scriptures cannot be broken." First he says: "It is written: You are gods," etc., and then he himself adds: "And yet the Scriptures cannot be broken." He wants to say: It is indeed strange that the authorities are called gods, but — the Scripture cannot be broken. So let us also say. What is written is certain to us. May modern theology continue to develop, it is developing into hell. It wants to deprive the poor Christian of the ultimate consolation of being able to rely on the Word of God. We give God the glory that he has given us His Word. And if all books lie, this book does not lie.

This faith of the Lutheran Church has also been carried over into its hymns. Our entire hymnal is a testimony to how it gives glory to God alone in the doctrine of Holy Scripture. For example, it says: "I believe what Jesus' word promises, I feel it or I don't feel it." "One little word can fell him." "This much the Lord's mouth tells us, we must abide by it, we will not let an angel drive us from this ground." The whole song; "O Lord of hosts, thy holy word." "Even though you have already ascended from this earth in sight and now remain invisible from us all here for this time, until your judgment will begin there and we will all stand before you and look at you with joy: so you are always with us and your church according to your word and not bound in one place with your flesh and legs; your word stands firm like a wall, which no one can change, no matter how clever he may be. You say: Take this is my body, you shall eat it orally; drink all my blood, with you I remain, you shall not forget mine. You have spoken it, therefore it is true; you are almighty, therefore no thing is impossible for you. And even though my heart does not understand how your body can be in many places at the same time, and how this happens, I still trust your words; how this can be, I command you, in your word I am content to believe." "On God's word alone," says the collection of songs in the prayer treasure, "I will build my foundation and faith. That shall be my treasure forever, in which alone I will trust. I will not compare human wisdom with the divine word. What God's word clearly speaks and judges, everything shall give way. My heart shall rely on God and his word alone. His Word shall be a light for me to walk in the right way. O God, let no false teaching separate me from your truth. Help me to confess the truth for the sake of your name."

Only through the teaching of the Lutheran Church is all glory given to God alone; this is evident, among other things, from its doctrine

53 [1873 Western District essay by Walther]

**2. Of the Cause of Sin, Death, Hell and Damnation.** ^

[Particularly on Election and Predesitination.]

That this doctrine in particular has been singled out is due to the fact that the Synod of Iowa is currently accusing the Synod of Missouri of being Calvinistic. For we, following Luther, have proved that it is God alone who prepares man for salvation and finally introduces him into salvation; that man's free will is not at all active in this; that man deserves nothing at all so that God may give him eternal life; does nothing for the sake of which the good God accepts him into heaven; that God has seen nothing in any man from eternity that he should have said: "I foresee that man will be such and such; I will choose him." This teaching is Luther's teaching. We do not want to accept the contrary doctrine, which he condemns in his precious writing *The Bondage of the Will*, and that is why we have publicly confessed it. This was a great annoyance to the Iowans. They thought that what we published was pure Calvinism; that by teaching that God had found nothing in man to elect him, we must therefore also maintain that God had found nothing in man to condemn him; that as man has no merit to go to heaven, so, according to our doctrine, he must not be guilty of being damned, as the Calvinists maintain. For they say that people are saved and that people are damned comes from the eternal divine decree. But we condemn this doctrine with all our heart. We firmly and certainly believe — and we are prepared to die for this, if God in his grace preserves us — that all those who have been chosen by God for salvation have been chosen only by free grace, by free mercy; that God has seen nothing, nothing at all in them for the sake of which he has decided to save them. We hold that there is no cause at all in man why he is saved, but that the cause alone is God's eternal mercy and the merit of Jesus Christ. We reject every third cause of salvation that is supposed to lie in man.

Now, of course, reason says: "If it is the case that the elect are chosen by the mere grace of God, then it follows that even if people are not saved but damned, it can only be because God has not chosen them." But reason cannot conclude otherwise. We Lutherans differ from the sectarians and Calvinists in that we do not draw this conclusion. Holy Scripture teaches that we are chosen by grace, by God's purpose, by the counsel of his will. Nowhere does it say that we are chosen because God foresaw that we would be good people. Everything is attributed only to God's grace, God's mercy. And the person who is introduced into heaven must say:

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"Dear God, it is you alone who brought me here; if it had been according to my merit, according to my will, I would now also be in hell like the others; I thank your mercy alone; you have chosen me, a damned and lost man." But those whom God has not chosen have not been chosen, have not been saved, precisely because, even though God has bestowed all his grace on them, they have willfully rejected this grace. They did not want to accept it. God sent his Son into the world for them and instituted the ministry of preaching reconciliation for their sake; he sent the apostles into all the world, had the ministry of preaching established everywhere, ordained Baptism, the Lord's Supper and absolution for them: they let everything be in vain. The word was powerful enough; but they not only opposed it with their natural resistance, which God always takes away, but with a willful resistance, as Stephen said to the crowd in the high council in Jerusalem: "You always resist the Holy Spirit." That men are saved is caused solely by God's mercy; that men are damned is caused solely by man, by man's wickedness, but not by God in any way. This is what we assert. This is also written in our symbolic books.

Luther explained this wonderfully in his treatise against Erasmus: "That free will is nothing" [or *The Bondage of the Will*]. But the Iowans say that Luther's book on free will is a completely false book, that it contains pure Calvinism, and that in this book God is consequently made the cause of damnation. But they want to be considered good Lutherans. That is why they say that Luther later revoked this writing, whereas they know or should know — it is impossible to decide — that Luther not only did not revoke this writing "That Free Will is Nothing" until his death, but declared it to be his best writing alongside the Small Catechism and the Church Postils. These were good books, he said, and he had to say so, but not to his credit. So if the Iowans say it is heretical, they must also declare that Luther died a heretic. But it is untrue. This writing contains the pure, honest, biblical, evangelical doctrine. Admittedly, it leaves no trace of free will; Luther sweeps out every corner of it. Anyone with a little leaven of Pelagianism will of course bang his head against this writing, be annoyed by it, and think it is a horrible book. For this is true: Luther speaks so powerfully and so boldly in it that one often feels as if lightning had struck, until the lightning fades again and one realizes: The man is right after all; it is the blessed doctrine that points poor man to God's mercy. That is true: he sometimes speaks as Calvin did, but don't let that change your mind. If two people say the same thing, it is by no means the same thing. Luther does not want to teach absolute predestination,

but he wants nothing, nothing at all, to be attributed to man. This is already clear from the title of the book. It does not read: Of Predestination, but: *The Bondage of the Will.* You have to pay attention to this, otherwise you won't understand Luther properly. Luther only wants to deny man's free will in spiritual matters, which is why he attributes everything, but not sin, to God.

Now that an accounting has been given as to why the teachings of our church regarding the origin of sin, death, hell, and dam nation are here considered as a proof that only through the teaching of the Lutheran Church is all glory given to God, let us hear what the Augsburg Confession, the Formula of Concord, and Luther himself write about it.

Augsburg Confession: "Of the Cause of Sin they teach that, although God does create and preserve nature, yet the cause of sin is the will of the wicked, that is, of the devil and ungodly men; which will, unaided of God, turns itself from God, as Christ says John 8:44: When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own". (Art. 19 [*Triglotta* p. 337])

Here our Confession declares that the cause of sin does not lie in God — to assert this would be a terrible blasphemy; it would make God the devil himself — but in the evil will of the devil and then in the will of man which has become evil through the devil's seduction. Thus it says in the 11th article of the

Formula of Concord: "As God is not the cause of sin, so he is not the cause of the punishment of damnation, but the only cause of damnation is sin, for the wages of sin is death; and as God does not will sin, nor does he take pleasure in sin, so he does not will the death of the sinner.... Of the vessels of mercy he clearly says that the Lord himself has prepared them for glory, which he does not say of the damned, who have prepared themselves, and not God, as vessels of condemnation." (Solid Decl. Art. 11, 1-82)

The Augsburg Confession only testifies to us that God is not the cause of sin; the Formula of Concord now makes the conclusion which necessarily follows from this: that therefore God is not the cause of death, therefore also not the cause of hell, not the cause of damnation; but all this is only the consequence of sin, which God has not caused. That is why it is blasphemous speech when the rationalists say: "Yes, God has created sinfulness in man." The first humans already wanted to attribute the cause of sin after the fall to God. Adam wanted to blame Eve and Eve wanted to blame the serpent. "Why," said Eve, as it were, "did you make the serpent?"

and Adam wanted to say: "Why did you give me Eve?" This is part of our nature: we prefer to blame God; we think he will be able to answer for it.

The quotation also says that God spoke differently about the vessels of mercy and the vessels of condemnation, namely Romans 9:22-23. Of the vessels of wrath it says in v. 22: "which are prepared for condemnation"; but of the vessels of mercy it says in v. 23 in the original Greek text: "προητοίμασεν" i.e. which he has prepared beforehand for glory. This is strange. Has it slipped from the Holy Spirit that he first says of the vessels of wrath: They are prepared (in Greek: *κατηρτίσμενα*), but of the vessels of mercy: They are prepared beforehand (*προητοίμασεν*)? By this he means: Of course no one will go to hell unless he is prepared for it. But such a one condemns himself and makes himself a vessel of dishonor. It is different with the vessels of mercy: they do not prepare themselves; they have been prepared from eternity through the election of grace. Man owes his salvation to God alone; but he owes his damnation only to himself, and God has no part in it. He who is saved must bring glory to God; he who is damned must only cry "woe" over himself.

That it is a gross falsehood when the Iowa Synod says that Luther's writing on free will contains Calvinistic elements is proven by the following passage from that writing itself: "God does not grieve over the death of the sinner, which he works, but grieves over the misery and death which he finds in man, and would gladly take it away.... For he wills that all men should be saved, 1 Tim. 2:4, because he has come to all through the word of salvation, and it is the fault of our will that we do not accept Him, as the Lord Christ says in Matthew 23:17: "How often have I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you were not willing." (XVIII, 2235. f. [*The Bondage of the Will*, AE 33, pp. 139—40)])

Luther teaches, say the Iowans, that God does not want to save all men at all, that he does not want them in heaven, but has destined them to sin and damnation; but Luther writes here clearly and distinctly that the dear "God would gladly take away misery and death; for he wants all men to be saved, and it is our fault that we do not accept him". This is well to remember. If we are condemned, it is not because God does not help us, but because our will is to blame. His will is our salvation; our will, unfortunately, is our ruin, while we, in our blindness, take it for our salvation. Calvin would have said to such a writing as Luther's: "I can never ever sign that, it is heresy." And now they want to turn

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Luther into a Calvinist. Anyone who does not read our theological journal (*Lehre und Wehre*) should not be misled by the cries of the Iowans [and several of today's LC-MS theologians.]. If they call us Calvinists, they are lying. We hate Calvinism as a doctrine of devils, because it robs the poor sinner of the highest consolation, namely that the whole world is redeemed and that he can therefore count himself among it. We are horrified by this abominable doctrine, and then the Iowans come and claim, because we hold to the doctrine of the eternal free mercy of God and therefore deny everything to man: "You are also Calvinists." The Bible says on the one hand: "It is all grace", and on the other: "You have not willed"; there we hear what is the cause of salvation and damnation.

Luther also wrote to John Lang in 1522: "Why do you argue about the evil that God does? I see that you have nothing else to do in such perversions of Satan. He needs no work, nor is it a work or a deed, but an omission of the work of God. For that is why we do evil, because he ceases to work in us and lets nature do what it does in its wickedness. Otherwise, where he himself works, nothing but good follows. And this omission on God's part is what Scripture calls hardening. For evil cannot happen because it is nothing, but only comes about when nothing good happens or is prevented." (XV, Appendix, p. 230. f. [St. L. 15, 2609])

Everything that happens in the world does not happen without God. The dear God is not like a watchmaker who puts together a watch, then leaves it, goes his way and cares no more about it; but, having created the world, he sustains it and works everywhere: he is, to use a crude image, as it were the steam-power of the great machine. As soon as the steam is gone, the machine stands still. As soon as God were to leave the world for a moment, the whole machine would come to a standstill. He not only sets the sun, moon and stars, the great universe, in motion, but everything that moves, moves because God is the moving force. Even the thief who climbs in through the window at night and reaches for the box of money he wants to steal could not bend his five fingers if the good Lord stopped being the driving force in him at that moment. For we are not gods, but only a shadow, a nothing; the good Lord must be in us and drive us. As long as the world has existed, many have argued about this and said: "If it is true that we live, move and have our being in him, then God must also do evil." Of course, reason cannot think otherwise. Calvin says: That is also the case. But Luther says in the quotation quoted above: "Why do you argue about the evil that God does? I see that you have nothing else to do in such disruptions of Satan." Just now, when the whole Church is bleeding from a thousand wounds, the modern theologians are consuming and wasting their whole lives, for instance, to get out a a single point which

stands above a dash, while there are so many important things concerning the salvation of millions of souls about which theologians can research and write. Luther continues: "Satan does not need a work, nor is it a work or a deed, but an omission of God's work." God does not do evil in man; people already do evil without him. The thief certainly needs God to keep his hand alive, but he does not need God to give him the thief's mind, so that instead of putting his hand to the spade, he puts it in his neighbor's purse. God does not give him this, but he has given him his hand. But the thief has misused the moving powers of God for evil. It would of course be wonderful if a father gave his hand to his ungodly child and did not pull it back, if the child took the father's own hand and gave him a slap on the cheek with it; but that is how God does it. He gives man strength unto death and does not withdraw it from him, even though man continues to misuse it to fight against God. Now is the time for grace, patience and long-suffering. When this time has passed, we will see with horror how great God's justice and holiness are. Just as we now marvel at his long-suffering and cannot find ourselves in this long-suffering, so we would not be able to find ourselves in God's wrath if we did not have a transfigured eye. Luther continues: "For that is why we do evil, because he ceases to work in us and lets nature do what it does in its wickedness. Otherwise, where he himself works, nothing but good follows." This is an important passage, for God is a sun of goodness. The sun does not need to do anything to make it dark, it only needs to stop shining and it becomes dark. But where it works, it becomes bright and light. Such a sun of goodness is the good Lord. Where God works, there is pure light, pure good, pure happiness, pure joy. But when God wants to punish in his wrath, he does nothing. It is precisely when he does nothing that misery arises. As soon as he leaves man in his misery, he sinks from level to level, from evil to evil, from ruin to ruin. Luther continues: "And this forbearance of God is called hardening in Scripture." Everyone should remember this word! Calvin understood "hardening" to mean a real act of God in the hearts of people, i.e. making them hardened. No, says Luther, one can of course say: God hardens; but then this means nothing else than that the good God ceases to work in the heart of man — and then he hardens himself. We are, of course, talking about the kingdom of grace and the Spirit. Just as the sun's failure to emit rays is the cause of darkness; or just as, when it does not rain for a long time and the water ceases to flow on the ground, the ground becomes hard of itself, so that one can say, as the Scripture does, that the field is like

stone, like iron, and just as this is the cause of the rain doing nothing: so it is with God as soon as he does not work in man. As soon as God does not work in man, man is lost. (Thus his sinful spirit drags him from sin to sin.) Then he becomes hardened. Luther continues: "For evil cannot happen because it is not." Evil is not a certain thing. It has not been seen. We have seen things that have come about through sin, but sin is a nothing that "comes about when nothing good happens or is prevented". The Calvinists are very careful in their confessions that it is not so easy to see how blasphemously they speak; but their theologians have blabbed off the map. They actually say that God is the cause of sin, even the active cause, and if not the effecting cause, then at least the accidental, deciding, decreeing, irritating (*instigans*) cause of it. This does not occur in their confessional writings. — "God does not grieve over the death of the sinner which he works, but grieves over the misery and death which he finds in man." God works, as the ancients expressed it in their artistic language, the *material* but not the *formal aspect* of sin, i.e. every action we perform is not in itself something good or evil, but it depends on the attitude. For example, if a murderer cuts someone's head off, he belongs on the gallows; but if the executioner does it, he does the very same thing that the murderer does, but it is not a sin for him. On the contrary, he does a good work, he acts in his profession, and if he does it in faith, God will still reward him for this act. Furthermore, blasphemous words are not in themselves a sin; for when we read from the Bible, for example, how people have blasphemed, we are not committing a sin, because we want to say how reprehensible men have been, how it has been in their wicked, wretched souls that they could have uttered such things against the Creator. It follows, therefore, that God does everything that man does, with the exception of sin, which is of the devil. God sustains everything he has created, but not sin. As much as God has created the devil, so much is good; for what God does is and remains eternally good. So also our flesh remains a creation of God and therefore good; but sin is attached to it, with which God has nothing to do. For Scripture expressly says in Psalm 5[:4]: "For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness." This is an important passage.

The passage in 2 Sam. 24:1, where it is said that the anger of the LORD provoked David to number the people, is remarkable. "Behold," say the Calvinists here, "God himself provoked him." But this is what the unfortunate heretics do. When they find a passage which at best suits their purposes, they do not look further into Scripture to find out whether it is to be taken exactly as it reads. Of course, if we had no other passage,

we would also speak: As it is written, so it must be taken. But the Holy Spirit, who is wise, has inspired another prophet with yet another passage. 1 Chron. 21:1 reads: "And Satan stood against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel." It is indeed marvelous that in the one passage it is said that the anger of the Lord provoked David, and in the other that Satan caused him to number the people; but this is not a contradiction, but if we take both passages together, we get an exceedingly important, prayerful, adorable doctrine, namely this: When the sinner sins, he has not detached himself from God, so that he is now an independent being next to God, who can do what he wants. No, God does not allow the reins of world government to be taken out of his hands, but keeps them for all eternity. A child of God will not be harmed if he does not allow it. That is why the Holy Spirit can also say: God's anger provoked David to have the people numbered; but by this he means that God was so angry with David because of his unfaithfulness that he decided to allow the devil to give David the power to number the people, which would then result in a great judgment. The devil could not have accomplished such a thing for himself. He could not even command swine, for when the Savior cast out a whole legion of swine from a possessed man, they first had to ask him politely to let them go into the swine. So we see that since the devil cannot even exercise dominion over a pig without God's permission, how much less can he do so over a human being, or even over a child of God. This is what the Holy Spirit wants to teach with these passages: If anything happens, whether good or evil, it happens under the divine government either by God's grace or by God's wrath. Whoever does not believe this does not firmly believe that there is a God. For to believe that there is a God does not mean to believe that an old man sits up there in his grandfather's chair and says: "I have to watch what the people below do from time to time." No, God is the immeasurable, incomprehensible One who permeates the whole world, who is everywhere and is God everywhere, who moves and drives and pushes and sustains and governs everything. Anyone who does not believe in a living, omnipotent, immeasurable God has only an idol in his heart. That is why the Holy Spirit could say with full truth in one place: "The devil!" suggests it to David, and in another: "God's wrath provokes him.".

Question: What does the Augsburg Confession mean by the words: "who immediately, when God has removed his hand, has turned from God to evil"? [AC 19; Trigotta p. 53] Answer: As soon as God does not work by grace in a person, the person can do nothing but sin. Man can be compared to a falling stone. If it were possible for us to step to the ends

of the earth and let a stone fall, it would fall down into the immensity and fall until something came to stop it. It is similar with man. If God does not work in him, he falls from sin to sin. If an unconverted man does not fall into murder, adultery, fornication, theft, he has his God to thank for this; for if God had withdrawn his hand from him, he could soon have found himself in such a position that his evil heart would have fallen upon these abominations as well. When we realize this, we will not be proud of our honor and will say, "Oh, gracious God, you have protected me until now; just do not remove your hand from me, or I will be lost." For out of the heart comes murder, adultery, fornication, thievery, false witness, blasphemy. All this comes out. So it was in there. It sticks in the heart of all men. Therefore, if God does not hold his hand over us, we are lost.

Now follow some passages from the Reformed Confession, namely from the resolutions of the Synod of Dort. It states: "The Synod rejects the errors of those who teach that God leaves no one out of his mere righteous will in the case of Adam and in the general state of sin and damnation, or in the communication of the grace necessary for faith and conversion." (*Corpus libb. symboL, qui in eccles. Reformat, auctoritatem publicam obtinuerunt. Ed. J. C. G. Augusti. Elberfeldi* 1827. p. 212.)

This is assumed by all strict Calvinists. They reject the teaching that God passes over no one entirely and offers mercy to everyone, and that he leaves no one to his misery without mercy, and maintain that the correct doctrine is that God's mercy extends only to the elect, but that God does not want the rest to be saved at all, and that he does not want to save them from their certain destruction, but that they should remain in the sin of Adam according to God's will. They claim that God once wanted to show the whole world how just and angry he was against sin; therefore he created people whom he knew would fall, and thought: "I will save some, but I will make an example of the others; I will not send them a Savior, I will not give them grace to believe. What do the Reformed teach other than that God is the cause of remaining in sin and not being saved from death, hell and damnation? In their confession they only express themselves so carefully so that they can hide themselves a little; but anyone who looks closely at their words will realize that they want to say that God is ultimately to blame; he is such a sovereign being; He could also prepare such a tragedy that he creates millions and millions, one part of which he wants to cast into hell so that one can see how just and angry he is against sin, but the other part

of which he wants to have in heaven so that one can see how merciful and kind he is. But none of this, but just the opposite is found in Scripture, as we shall hear when we discuss the doctrine of God's general will of grace in the present thesis.

The resolutions of Dortrecht go on to say: "That some are endowed with faith by God in time, and some are not, comes from his eternal counsel. For God is aware of all his works from eternity, Acts 15:18, Eph. 1:11." That is no reason at all. They make God as powerless as a human being. We can also know some things in advance, at least with some certainty; indeed, an ungodly person who does not want to convert knows for certain that he will go to hell. But with God it is quite different. Luther says of him: "What we humans see lengthwise, God sees everything crosswise", i.e. if we want to see into the distance, it soon becomes foggy that we can no longer see anything in the distance, but God is one thing as close as the other. Therefore he knows beforehand not only what He wants to do, but what others want to do, yes, he even knows what might happen under other circumstances. The Reformed deny this, which is why they say that foreknowledge and predestination are one and the same. In those resolutions it is further stated:

"according to which counsel he graciously softens the hearts of the elect, although they are hard, and inclines them to faith, but leaves the non-elect to their wickedness and hardness out of righteous judgment." (op. cit. p. 203.) When they say here: "out of righteous judgment", this of course says nothing; for if God only wanted to proceed according to justice, he would not be able to save others either. For we are all made of one and the same dough; by nature we are all lost sinners. Therefore, if God does not give, or rather does not impart, universal grace to the individual, something else must be added, namely, that man does not want to accept it at all.

Finally, the Swiss Confession states: "God has decided to reveal his glory in such a way that he has decided to first create man pure, then to allow him to fall, and then to have mercy on *some* of the fallen and therefore to choose them, but to leave the others in the corrupt mass and finally to dedicate them to eternal perdition." (*Formula Consensus Helvetica non 1675*. op. cit. p. 446. f.)

It is therefore terrible that the Iowans equate us with the Calvinists. In comparison with them, it is to be noted how it is possible that one can deduce, according to his reason, a quite terrible doctrine from a doctrine which is in itself quite right. For example, the Bible says: The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God. Furthermore: The Father is the Lord, the Son is the Lord, the Holy Spirit is

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Lord; the Father is omnipotent, the Son is omnipotent, the Holy Spirit is omnipotent; the Father is eternal, the Son is eternal, the Holy Spirit is eternal. When the reckoners come upon these things, they bring out three Gods, three Lords, three Almighties, three Eternals. "Yes," they say, "what shall we say 3 times 1 is 3? There we sit." We say: The Bible does indeed say: The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God; but it does not say: 3 times 1 is 3, therefore there are three gods. Rather, it says the opposite, namely that there are three persons, each of whom is God, Lord, almighty and eternal, but that there is only one divine being, and therefore only one God, one Lord, one Almighty, one Eternal. Therefore, away with the art of arithmetic when it applies to God's word and divine things! The ass was also not allowed to go up Mount Moriah and — reason is the ass. [Genesis 22:3-5]

We now come to No. 3 in the third thesis. It reads: Only through the teaching of the Lutheran Church is all glory given to God alone; this is evident, among other things, from its teaching:

## 3. Of Divine Providence. ^

Of course, all doctrines without exception could have been cited to prove the truth of this thesis, since every doctrine ultimately has this goal: God alone should have the glory. But the fact that among the few this one in particular has been chosen is mainly due to two reasons: First, because all men without exception are atheists by nature, because in all men by nature is the doctrine: there is no God. And even if all people say by nature that there is a God, they do not believe in a living God and the world appears to them to be empty of God. They live under the impression that they can do whatever they want here and God is idly watching. But that is terrifying. Where this is believed, one believes in an idol; and that is what every man does by nature until he is converted. Then things change completely. Wherever he now walks and stands, and wherever he sees and hears and feels, everything, everything is something that reminds him of God, everywhere he stands is God, everywhere he feels God, everywhere he experiences God's workings. — Secondly, this teaching has been chosen because we live in a terribly atheistic age in which everything is attributed to nature instead of God: Everything is supposed to go according to the eternal laws that lie in nature. The dear Christians who talk so much about the laws of nature and think that these are actually the driving force have no idea how they can be seduced into blasphemous ideas and speech. A Christian should rather see God at work everywhere, as the apostle Paul says: "In him we live and move and have our being."

But since this doctrine is a very broad and wide one, and therefore many things could be referred to which would also be excellently suited to accomplish our purpose, namely, to show that in our

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Lutheran doctrine of the providence of God lies glory, we will only consider two sides of this doctrine. First: What does divine providence extend to? or: What is the good God concerned about, what does He care for? Secondly: What influence has the good God on everything that happens in the world? To what extent is the good God active as often as something happens in the whole world? To what extent does God cooperate or, as the old theologians express it, concur in all actions?

J. Rambach writes: "The object of divine providence is all created things, none excepted, visible and invisible, living and inanimate, heaven, earth and sea, and all that is therein. As he created everything, so his providence extends to everything. He sustains 1. the invisible creatures, the angels; for the good cannot govern themselves without his wisdom and cannot sustain themselves without his power, the evil cannot harm themselves without his permission, and he sets limits and boundaries to their wickedness. 2. the visible creatures, and among them not only man as the noblest creature, but also all irrational animals. In Egypt, frogs and lice must carry out his commands."

How often has God made the locusts into his armies? An atheist, of course, in his blindness, thinks that this is very dishonorable talk from God. But that is God's greatest honor, that no mosquito can move in the universe without Him; for there is nothing beside the dear God that could say to Him: Do thou thy part, and I will do mine. God says to him: You are nothing where I cease to work in you and on you! And this concerns the archangel like the smallest frog, yes, the smallest mosquito, the smallest mite and moth. Oh, it is a very blessed teaching! Once you have grasped it correctly, you go through the world in a completely different way, then you see the dear God everywhere with the eyes of faith; and that makes the Christian not go through the world like a cow. When a Christian walks through the meadow, he sees the hand of God everywhere, how it clothes the beautiful flowers so lovingly and how it puts strength into the fruit so that man and the cattle get what they need.

Rambach continues: "But such provision extends over all genera, over all species, indeed over all individuals of each genus; e.g. God provides not only for the genus of creatures called birds, but for every species, storks, swallows, sparrows, indeed for every single specimen (piece) of them, for every stork, swallow and sparrow."

Anyone who does not believe this is not a Christian. Every swallow, every sparrow has a life story, and if a sparrow had sense and could talk, it would tell us what miracles God has done, that it has found its food every day, how it has been so faithful, how it has slept peacefully, got up cheerfully and sang: Where is my

food? — If we could understand his language, a book could be written about every sparrow. — God cares for the small, individual sparrow! That is what we must believe; otherwise we believe in no living God, no Creator, Governor, Sustainer of all things, and then we are nothing but miserable atheists who take the core, the dear God, out of the world. We must strengthen ourselves in this faith in these shameful atheistic times, so that we do not allow the living, all-acting God to be taken from us unnoticed.

Rambach continues: "He not only ensures that the trees remain, "grow and are preserved, but also for every tree, branch and its leaf."

Although there are billions and billions of leaves in the whole world, there is not a single leaf that God has not taken care of. If you don't believe it, you don't have a God. For that is not believing in God, if one thinks that there is a being who is immensely great and created the world, who also sometimes intervenes in it — no, he has everything, everything, every little leaf in his hand and rules it as it must be; for precisely if the dear God did not care for the small, the great would not exist. Just think: if someone wanted to take care of a large building as a whole, but perhaps a stone was missing in an important place, and he wanted to say: "I take care of the whole, not the stone", it would not help him if the building suddenly leaned and he now wanted to hold the whole. There have been people who have thought that God takes care of the whole, but does not take care of the smallest things; but this is a boundless stupidity.

Rambach continues: "Each of these is under its own government, as Christ teaches in Matthew 10:29. A sparrow is one of the most despised and (apparently) useless birds, yet Christ says that none of them will be killed, shot or injured without the will of the Father."

Hunters often return home and say: "I didn't hit anything today." They may think it was partly due to the powder, but God did not allow the bird to be hit. Unbelieving hunters don't believe that, but we Christians do. And if one gathered all the cannons in the world and shot them off, — one would not hit the sparrow if its time had not yet come.

Rambach also writes: "Luke 12:6: "Not one of them is forgotten before God?"

What a great word that is: The dear God thinks of every sparrow; he does not forget even one! And yet people are so insane that they think: Should God complain like this and remember all the sparrows? Yes, God is such a great God that he does not need to calculate how many sparrows he still has. Even we, for example, can see

four windows at once on a house and estimate the number of panels; but God looks and sees millions times millions before him and knows their number without calculating.

Rambach continues: "Even the smallest, most despised and useless things are subject to divine government and providence. Christ assures us of this in Matthew 10:30: 'Now the very hairs of your head are numbered,' so that none can fall out except according to the Father's will. What we consider valuable, we count."

A very beautiful remark! The Savior says: "Now your hairs are also numbered." He does not mean to say that God does a sum and counts them in this way, but rather that God considers everything he has created important, he considers it valuable and cares about everything without exception.

Rambach continues: "It therefore means a precise science and diligence. Just as the sunlight does not spurn the smallest worm, neither does God's providence."

God could have arranged it so that the glorious, radiant sun with its light would only fall into the eye of immortal man; but no, he has made it so that, as often as the sun comes out like a bridegroom from his chamber, the golden light falls into the eye of the least worm, even gilding and silvering every speck of dust. He has, so to speak, written in bright letters before our eyes: I take care of everything, my goodness is daily over everything, I care for everything.

Rambach continues: "So we must realize that this also extends to the smallest things. It is not as if an earthly king were to provide for all and every one of his subjects through a general decree, even though there are many thousands whom the king does not know. God knows the smallest things and provides for them, as Christ, the mouth of truth, assures us. It is true that reason thinks it indecent to the majesty of God that he should lower himself even to the least of his creatures. The pagan Pliny thinks that the divine majesty is defiled when it cares for despised things. But these are foolish thoughts, as the great Doctor of the Church Jerome also held." *)

*) St. Jerome writes: "It is absurd to think of God's majesty as knowing at any moment how many mosquitos arise and how many die, how many bugs, fleas and flies there are on earth, how many fish swim in the water. — We are not such silly flatterers of God that, while we draw his power even to the lowest, we insult ourselves by saying that Providence is one and the same as regards rational and irrational beings." (*Comment. in Habacuc*. I.)

It is hard to understand how a divine scholar could have spoken thus. It is sad! He speaks as if it would cost the dear God a great

arithmetic experiment to know how many insects are at this moment in the whole world, while his eye surveys everything, from beginning to end, without first having to consider anything; for the dear God does not make conclusions as we men do, but knows everything about himself, the present, the past and the future: he lives in the eternal today. This must have completely obscured the omnipresence and omniscience of God for Jerome! That is why Rambach adds:

"For thereby the honor of God is rather promoted, namely 1. the honor of his infinite goodness, when he embraces with the arms of his providence both the lowest worm and the highest angel. If it is not decent for God to create them, why should it be indecent for him to preserve them?"

This is very important! Otherwise we must become atheists and materialists and say: "That's how it came out of the mud; God can't help it", which is a wicked, blasphemous teaching.

Rambach continues: "2. The glory of his power and wisdom. The power of God is no less visible in the creation of a mosquito than of an elephant; hence also in its preservation."

If one wanted to argue about which is more artful and powerful, to create a mosquito or an elephant, one would almost say that the mosquito is more artful and powerful. The mosquito has eyes, ears, mouth and a mass of limbs, and in this little creature there is a kind of soul, a life that flows through everything about it, a tendency either to do something or not to do something. All its limbs are connected in an unspeakably artful way to form a whole organism, so that the most artful steamship is a mere lump and cannot be compared with it. For the mosquito moves itself, has life, and this life goes from the outermost limb to the outermost limb again; it can even sing, can even sting, the little thing can pursue man, and man is glad if he can only escape from it, and the elephant — even he is frightened when a swarm of bees comes upon him. The big clumsy animal is afraid of the little insect. Should we not be ashamed that there are people who do not admire this, who pass by this great work of art like unreasoning cattle and do not bow their knees before God and say: Oh God, how great You are! Millions upon millions You have created and daily preserve what we despise as nothing, as vermin, and therein lies hidden Your supreme wisdom, Your supreme power.

Rambach goes on to say: "Wisdom shows its excellence when it directs and guides creatures, who themselves do not know the purpose of their being, to such a purpose."

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No one will attribute to the bee that it thinks, e.g: In two or three months it will snow, then it will be winter, then there will be no more flowers, you will have to work hard, otherwise you will starve, what will your children do then? No, the good Lord drives the bee to build its hive so beautifully and to attach everything in the most beautiful way, and if people didn't come over it, it would always be well provided for. Who is it that tells the bee: Get wax and so much honey and collect it in cells? — It is the good Lord, the conductor, otherwise no animal would take care of it. God also instructs the beaver to build his house in such a way that he does not drown in it. — There was a very interesting article about this recently in "Abendschule" No. 11. There a new philosopher by the name of Hartmann, who otherwise wants to know nothing of a personal God, speaks of the caterpillar of the night peacock's eye: after a short time it weaves itself in and builds itself a shell that is easy to open from the inside, but resists attacks from the outside. The philosopher says: "This is the unconscious in the animal." Yes, what this atheist writes is unconscious nonsense!

Rambach continues: "There is also no difference between creatures in themselves, but it arises only from their relation to us; for example, it is believed that a worm is more contemptible than a lion. The latter, of course, as we regard it, is better than a worm; but if we disregard the relation, the least worm has as much excellence in its kind as a lion."

Perfectly true. A mosquito is just as skillfully composed as a lion. Naturalists are amazed to see, with the help of their loupes, all that is in a mosquito's leg, all the little veins it has. If all men were to conspire to devote their whole lives to making a mosquito, for example, they would accomplish nothing with all their intelligence, wisdom and power and would be put to shame. Therefore, cursed be those who deny the living God, while everywhere they look they see themselves surrounded by immeasurable power and wisdom, and they are nothing but impotent dust.

Rambach continues: "For this consists only in a certain constitution of the parts of which the body is composed. Nor does God make a burden, as one might think. His infinite mind cannot be overloaded, nor can it be weighed down." (Schriftm. Explanation of the foundation of theology. Frankf. 1738. p. 157. ff.)

Now follow a couple of testimonies from Luther on the same point. The same writes:

"Among the things which are not to be taught before everyone, you (Erasmus) say this is one: 'God is essentially present in all creatures. From which it follows that he is present

in a secret chamber as well as in heaven.'" Then you scold the scholastic quarrelers for uttering useless things, and now say: 'Even if this article is true, it would not be good to teach such things before everyone'.... But where there are intelligent, honorable, Christian preachers who speak of these things with skillful, reasonable words, they can also speak of them and the like before the people without any danger... Therefore a Christian heart is not at all afraid to hear that God is with his own in death, in hell, in waters, in mud, which are as unclean and impure as other filth. Indeed, since Scripture says that God is in all places and fills all creatures, it is necessary to know that he is also in these places. If someone wanted to say that if I were thrown by a tyrant into a tower or an unclean pit, as has happened to many saints, I would not be able to call upon God or believe that he was with me until I came back to a decorated, painted church." (XVIII, 2094-96; [AE 33, 47])

Let but one fall into a secret pit, and he will believe the article. How many dear, dear martyrs have been thrown into the most horrible pits, and how many have been soaked in manure until they died. How they should have thought: The holy, pure God will not be with me in this stink? He may well be in it; it does not defile him, any more than the sun is defiled when it shines into the dung. For just as the golden sun, which casts its rays into the dung-hole as into the clear spring, is not defiled in the former and is not clarified in the latter, so the bright sun of God remains bright everywhere, it is not defiled anywhere, it is not darkened anywhere.

Luther writes in another passage: "It is God who creates, works and sustains all things by his almighty power and right hand, as our faith confesses; for he sends no ministers or angels when he creates or sustains anything, but all such things are the work of his divine power itself. But if he is to create and sustain it, he must be there and make and sustain his creation both in its innermost and outermost parts." [AE 37, 57 f.]

God cannot use tools to create and sustain; he does it all himself. He needs instruments to govern, but creating and sustaining is a privilege of the great majesty of God. But if he is to create and sustain, he must be there and create and sustain his creatures in the most essential as well as in the most essential. For example, when the Savior healed the sick son of the king (John 4:47-50) from afar, He did not do so by sending His power there, but the Jesus who was visible here was also invisible in the house where the sick man lay, and there He helped. If

Christ had not been omnipresent, he would only have been able to work where he was visible. It is the same with God.

Luther continues: "That is why he must be present in every creature in its most intimate, most outward parts, around and around, through and through, below and above, in front and behind, so that nothing more present or more inward can be in all creatures than God himself with his power." [AE 37, 58]

It means: "God with his power!" Not: power without God. That would be nonsense! But man would rather believe such nonsense than a living, immeasurable omnipresence of God. But Luther proves it from God's Word.

He continues: "For it is he who makes the skin; it is he who also makes the bones; it is he who makes the hair on the skin; it is he who also makes the marrow in the bones; it is he who makes every part of the hair; it is he who makes every part of the marrow; he must make everything, both part and whole: so his hand must be there to make it; it cannot fail." [Ibid.]

If God were not always there and did not always work, nothing would come into being. Most people think that if they see a very small green spike today and find it significantly larger in eight days, it has pushed itself out in this way. O we blind people! It doesn't push itself out. If the good Lord were not everywhere, no seed could germinate, no sprout could become a stalk, and no sprout would ever bear a leaf, a flower, a fruit.

Luther continues: "This is where the Scriptures come from, Isaiah 66:2....: 'The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool'. He does not say: A part of heaven is my chair, a part or place of earth is my footstool; but what and where heaven is, there is my chair, be it heaven below, above or beside the earth; and what or where earth is, be it on the bottom of the sea, in the grave of the dead or in the middle of the earth, there is my footstool. Now guess, where is his head, arm, breast, body, if he fills the earth with his feet and heaven with his legs? He reaches far above and beyond the world, above heaven and earth. What can or does Isaiah mean by this saying, for as St. Hilary also speaks about this, that God is essentially present at all ends, in and through all creatures in all their parts and places, so that the world of God is full and he fills them all."

The whole world is full of God; but this is the misery that man does not believe it, as was said at the very beginning. We humans are all atheists by nature; this is demonstrated daily and hourly. For would anyone indulge in even one vain thought, or speak evil words, do ungodly works, if he really believed: Here stands the good God? Purely, he would not do that. That is why a living Christian, like Joseph, is so afraid to do anything against his God. He knows that God

is always with him: he stands everything, he hears everything. God is not merely there in such a way that he only senses it, no, he is there in the flesh. Anyone who does not believe this does not believe in a God.

In this disgraceful, God-denying time, we must push this article hard. The dear Christians do the second and third articles well, but the first, they think, have long since shaken off their shoes. But we must also learn this article until we die; it is the foundation for the second and third articles. Many people don't really believe the first article; when they come to the second, their reason bumps up against it. But those who have accepted the great miracles of visible creation in faith will not be offended when they hear, for example: In the Lord's Supper is the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

Luther continues: "yet is not enclosed and encompassed by it (the world), but is at the same time outside and above all creation? These are all things incomprehensible beyond all measure, yet they are articles of our faith, brightly and powerfully attested in Scripture. It is little against this piece that Christ's body and blood are at the same time in heaven and in the Lord's Supper, and if the enthusiasts began to come here with reason and eyes, they should soon fall away and say: It would be nothing and, as is the virtue of the wicked, to say: There is no God. Ps 14:1 For how can reason suffer the divine majesty to be so small as to be present and essential in a grain, over a grain, through a grain, within and without? And even if it is a small majesty, can it still be completely and especially in each one, which are so innumerable? For he makes every grain special in all things, within and without."

For it is not true faith, if someone thinks that there is a bit of God everywhere, as we are always only at one point with one part of our life. We are just composite beings; but it is different with God. He is not only everywhere, but everywhere he is always whole. And yet there are not so many gods, as many times the dear God is everywhere whole. Yes, you say, how can I understand that? Indeed, no human being can understand that. But it is true; for God is not a creature of the spirit, who has a foot and a hand. He needs no space at all, nor can He be divided, He is a very simple being; where He is, He must be whole. So if God is in a grain, there is not just a bit of the dear God in it. The dear God Himself is in every speck, and the whole God. The whole God is also in us, in every part, and again in the whole. That is the omnipresence of God. But most people think that God is a spirit comparable to the air: just as the air spreads through the whole world, so God as a spirit is extended and spread through the whole world. But these are all wrong, stupid ideas, which

we concoct according to reason. No, where God is, there he is whole, and He is everywhere.

Luther continues: "Thus his power must be there everywhere in and on the grain: but now his power is united and one and does not divide itself, that he made the skin on the grain with his fingers, and the pith in the grain with his feet: so the whole divine power must be there, in and on the grain everywhere; for he does it all alone. Again, that the same majesty is so great that it can encompass neither this world nor a thousand worlds, and say: Behold, here it is." (Erlangen Edition. Vol. 30, pp. 58-60.) [Ibid. 59]

God does not need to go anywhere in order to be anywhere, for he is already everywhere. That is why Jesus did not descend from heaven as if on a staircase, for he was already in the whole world beforehand. He only began to be in the world in a different way, namely as the God-man.

Luther says in another writing: "We say that God is not a stretched out, long, broad, thick, high, deep water, but a supernatural, inscrutable being, who is at the same time in every little grain completely and utterly, and yet in all and above all and beyond all creatures; therefore there must be no fencing here, as the spirit (of the swarmers) dreams. For one body is much, much too wide for the Godhead, and there could be many thousands of Godheads within it, and again also much too narrow for one Godhead to be within it. Nothing is so small, God is still smaller; nothing is so great, God is still greater; nothing is so short, God is still shorter; nothing is so long, God is still longer; nothing is so broad, God is still broader; nothing is so narrow, God is still narrower, and so on, it is an inexpressible being above and beyond all that can be named or thought." (op. cit. p. 221. f.) [AE 37, 228]

When it says here: "Nothing is so small, God is even smaller", Luther means to say: If God wanted to be in the grain, you would say: "That is too small for him." Then I say to you: He could be mistaken for an even smaller object. He is so omnipotent that he can be everywhere, he needs no space, no room, no expansion. For us, of course, something is easily too small and, conversely, too big. A church is far too big for one person, as there can often be many hundreds of people in it. But with God it is different. Nothing is so big, God is always bigger, and nothing is so small, God can always be completely in it without having to shrink and shrivel up, as the Reformed say: "How can the body of Christ be in the host? He would then have to crawl into it completely." But these are stupid rational thoughts. His body is not the body of an ordinary human being, but the body of a great, immeasurable, eternal God, who can be wherever he wants.

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Now we hear, secondly, what God's providence actually consists of. About this says Joh. Gerhard: "Divine providence in regard to all things comprehends two operations in itself, preservation and government. Created things do not exist by themselves and by their own powers, but God sustains all things with his powerful word (Heb. 1:3), all things exist in him (Col. 1:17), in God we live, move, and have our being (Acts 17:18), as the being of the rays of the sun, the shadow of the body, so all creatures depend on the divine preservation."

Gerhard thus says: Rays, namely sunbeams, would not exist if there were not a sun from which they radiated; a shadow would not exist anywhere if there were not bodies that cast the shadow: this is precisely how it is with the existence of all things. They are only there because there is divine preservation. God did not create things so that they could exist for themselves, but in such a way that they are perpetually dependent on Him for all eternity. For God does not want to give his glory to anyone else: he always wants to be and remain the Creator, Sustainer and Governor of all things for all eternity. If a person loses God, the shadow has lost its body, the sunbeam its sun, and thus he himself has ceased to be.

Gerhard continues: "Preservation is nothing other than the continuation of being. Being and being preserved have the same author and the same origin. Therefore, just as all creatures have received their essence, their properties and their powers of action from God in creation and generation, they are also maintained by Him in their being and activity. There is therefore a constant influence of the divine all-sustaining power on all existing things, so that if it were withdrawn even for a moment, they could not work, indeed could not be. What is more natural to man than to move? and yet we move in God (Acts 17:28). What is more natural to the sun than to rise daily? and yet it is God who makes the sun rise (Matthew 5:45)."

Of course, like most languages in the world, we have a way of saying: "The sun rises, it rains, it hails." — But this is an improper way of speaking, which Scripture explains by the fact that it usually says: God makes the sun rise, God rains, God hails. Thus the Savior says: "He causes His sun to rise on the wicked and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous."

Gerhard continues: "Therefore, although all things have their nature implanted in them, they do not express it, nor can they express it, unless they are sustained in being and life by God's power, that I may say so. Ps 104:29-30: 'If thou hidest thy face, they are afraid; if thou takest away their breath, they perish, and return to dust.

If you let out your breath, they will be created and turn into the form of the earth. — Deut. 8:3. and Matt. 4:4. it is said that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God; From this we not only learn that God can nourish and sustain man without natural means, but we are also reminded that if God withdraws his Word, through which bread was first created and received the power to nourish, the bread could by no means nourish man, but that the constant influence of the creating and sustaining Word is necessary for it to express the power implanted in it to nourish."

Some people think: Let the bread nourish me, and that the stone cannot be digested and does not increase my blood, that is very natural. But where does this come from? We Christians know: because God placed his blessing on bread 6000 years ago. When there is an abundance of bread, one is immediately satisfied; but in the temptation, people devour bread upon bread and always complain of hunger and want to eat what they see that is edible. This is because God withdraws his blessing, and if he withdrew it completely from us, the best wheat we grow would not nourish us or satisfy our hunger. For the blessing that is in the grain nourishes us. Only the blind heathen thinks that the nourishing power is in the grain itself.

Gerhard continues: “Man is not healed by the herbs, but by the Word of God, which originally implanted that power in the herbs and still instills it as it were today." (*Loc de provid*. § 61-63.)

The godless physicians think that the medicinal herbs have this power; there is no need to believe in a god. But if God withdrew the blessing from the herbs, they would help us nothing.

Fecht writes: "If God were to withdraw his hand from any thing even for a moment, it would immediately fall back into nothingness." (*Controvers. Sylloge. Giessae* 1768. p. 80.)

Having spoken of the preservation of all things, we now come to the last part of the article on the providence of God, which deals with the divine government. Here, too, we shall hear only what is most necessary, namely, what is especially important if we are to recognize the glory due to God through the doctrine of this subject.

Thus John Gerard writes about this: "Divine Providence is otherwise active in the good actions of men, otherwise in the evil." It is assumed here that God is involved in all actions, whatever their nature, or, as the old theologians say, concurs, has an influence, that God is involved in everything that is done in the world — except sin. Now, however, good

actions are divided into two kinds, namely civil good and spiritual or good before God. Concerning this difference

Gerhard writes the following: "In civil good actions, divine providence works in such a way that it not only sustains the acting nature and gives it the powers to act, but sometimes also awakens those who are not born again and directs them to useful ends contrary to the intention of those by whom they were done. Thus it is said that God called Cyrus and seized him by his right hand (Isa. 45:1, 3)." —

This is extremely important so that we do not think that what the world does — especially the great deeds that are done in the state among the nations as nations — are all done merely by men. This is again an atheistic view of world events. God does everything and has his divine eye on everything. If God is not willing, no war can break out; if God is not willing, no peace can be made. And vice versa: if God is not willing, no human being can start a war, and if God is willing, the nations must make peace. God gives war, God gives defeat. Anyone who attributes victory to cannons or well-trained soldiers is basically an atheist; just as atheists have always said in recent times: "We already know who will win: — who has the best soldiers, cannons, etc.". While history shows that often the largest armies have done nothing against a small group. This was only because God did not want the small group to be overcome. Xerxes had to leave Europe again with his million soldiers after he had come to flood everything. Other tyrants, on the contrary, led everything out, not where it was favorable for them, but where it was thought that they must perish here. Why? God used them as a scourge. And we Christians, when we read in the newspapers, must always look not at men, who are only the instruments, but at God, who rules the world. If we see, for example, that things are going sadly in politics, as we Americans unfortunately see all too often, it is not enough for us to scold them, but we must beat our breast and say: God gives good times when he wants to bless; bad times when he wants to punish. Therefore no revolutions, but repentance! For he brings down the mighty and lifts up the lowly. We are only too inclined to always look at people. At that time the Jews probably did not think that Cyrus, this mighty ruler of the East, had been taken by the hand of God himself; that is why the prophet Isaiah had to tell them. But we now have the whole of Holy Scripture and with it the key to world history: therefore the most simple-minded Christian horseman can make a better judgment about it than the greatest historian, if he is not a Christian. For those who do not believe in the Gospel,

the whole world is an insoluble riddle. We have only recently seen from the first and second Napoleons that there is a God who rules the world. At first it was thought that it came from the first Napoleon's immense talent as a general that he seemed to want to drown the whole of Europe in his blood, but lo and behold! because people did not want to recognize that he was a scourge of God, the good Lord had to arrange it so that it was not actually people but the snow, the ice, the Russian sleet that defeated him.

Gerhard continues: "God commands and approves spiritually good actions in such a way that he works them through the Holy Spirit himself, since otherwise we are not capable of thinking anything ourselves, let alone doing anything (2 Cor. 3:5)."

This is well worth remembering! Spiritual good does not come from our own strength. Therefore, as long as a person does not yet have a new spirit and a new heart, everything he does is pure sin before God, even if it may be civically good. God alone works the conversion of man, man has nothing to do with it. He does not decide for himself, as the Iowa Synod teaches, but God decides for man, converts him, regenerates him, awakens him; God himself first makes him a new man. But now

Gerhard continues: "But after we are born again through the Holy Spirit, we are so impelled that we are also active ourselves, i.e., the will of man works through the powers not of nature, but through the powers given to him by the grace of the Holy Spirit, and is an active or cooperating instrument." —

So it is also true that anyone who has not come to the point of cooperating with the Holy Spirit is not a Christian. He who places his Christianity in the fact that he only goes to church now and then and allows God's Word to make an impression on him there, to awaken him, to frighten him, to comfort him, and then goes up and away and remains as he was: he is not a Christian. A Christian is the one who has allowed himself to be transformed by God's Word and Spirit in such a way that he himself now also cooperates in what is spiritually good; for only then does God want to cooperate. Now it should not be forgotten that man never cooperates with his natural power, but only through the Spirit and the power he has received in conversion.

But now we come to a most important subject, namely the extent to which God cooperates in evil deeds.

Gerhard says: "But God neither commands evil actions, nor wills them, nor supports them, nor impels them. We therefore say that God cooperates in evil acts first of all insofar as he foreknows them, or rather knows and sees them. Nothing escapes his eyes, which are brighter than the sun."

In recent times it has often been asserted that God does not foreknow

evil; for if God foreknew it, it would be necessary that it should happen: but if it were so, man could not help it. And some godless murderers blasphemously say that they were destined to murder. Of course, our reason cannot comprehend that God can know in advance that someone will or will not do something. Here we must recognize that God is inscrutable. Even if we can't work out how he can know something in advance that is not forced by man but happens freely — enough, he knows it. For Gerhard quite rightly says: "or rather knows and sees". He wants to say: strictly speaking, God has no foreknowledge, he has no present, no past, no future. What he knows, he knows; only for us is it foreknowledge, everything is already there before his eyes. That is why it is said of the Son: "Today I have begotten you." Today! He does not say: "Early in eternity", for then we would think that there was an "earlier" time, since he was not yet begotten and therefore did not yet exist. This begetting goes on forever. What continues to happen has also happened. But if Scripture were to say of a matter merely that it happened once, then it could easily be taken for an event that happened once and did not happen afterward, like creation; but the begetting of the Son of God is an eternal one, that is, one that continues to happen; for in eternity there is no such today before which is a yesterday and after which is a tomorrow.

Gerhard continues: "But this foreknowledge does not impose an unconditional necessity on evil actions. On the other hand, divine providence works in it by preserving nature, for in Him we move (Acts 17:28). But it is an astonishing long-suffering of God that he supports the members and sustains the powers and movements even in those actions in which he is most defiled; but this happens because of the intercession of the Son, and this goodness of God invites us to repentance."

Gerhard thus wants to say: If the Son of God had not, so to speak, made a contract with his heavenly Father from eternity, and the Father had not said: "Go, my Son, and make atonement for sinners": God would have had to cast out the world in Adam and Eve immediately after the fall to hell; he could not have looked on patiently, he would have had to destroy the world at once, it would have passed away in the fire of his wrath. This is why some of the angels who had no Savior were cast into the abyss of hell as soon as they sinned. But men were preserved because the Son of God prayed for them. He said to the heavenly Father: You cannot and must not destroy them, I will redeem them, I will become a man, I will take their sin upon myself, I will do for them what they have not done, and suffer for them what they would be

worthy to suffer for their sin, I will empty the last drop from the cup of your wrath. Then the Father declared: "Well, let the world still stand until the last one is born whom I have chosen for salvation. When the last chosen one is born, the last support of the world will have fallen away. God can then no longer leave the world standing in his wrath. This is why Luther says so beautifully: Christians are the legs of the world, which is why they have to wade in the mud. Yes, it is an amazing long-suffering of God that he preserves the wicked, preserves the tongue with which they blaspheme him, preserves the ear that hears the blasphemies, preserves the eyes that commit adultery and fornication, sustains the throat through which, worse than beasts, they pour intoxicating drinks, worse than cattle, the feet with which they walk in the paths of destruction, the fist that murders the brother, the body that should be a temple of the Holy Spirit but is a temple of idols. Oh, the indescribable patience of God!

God is not bound by the so-called laws of nature. The three men in the fiery furnace are an example of this. And when God had the prophet Jonah thrown into the sea, he did not let him drown, but brought him into the belly of the whale. And when the Jews were to pass through the Red Sea, the water lost its quality of always needing a boundary and stood there like a wall. God has just proved that it is he who continually maintains the laws of nature, but not nature apart from him. — But when God holds up to us in Scripture the example of Jeroboam's withered hand, he is saying to us: Behold, if I withdraw my hand, you should also withdraw yours.

Gerhard continues: "For if we were immediately destroyed when we sin, we could not turn to repentance (Rom. 2:4); then if a person heaps up God's wrath according to his unrepentant heart, he will receive it so that God will show the greatness of his wrath against sin in the punishments afterwards for the glory of divine justice (Ex. 9:16)." The more a person resists divine grace, the more he provokes God's wrath, the more he heaps up a treasure of God's wrath for that day. Of course, some are preserved who thereby only receive greater condemnation, while others are suddenly taken away.

Gerhard continues: "But a careful distinction must be made between the movement and action itself, and the error of the action. The action as action is not the sin, otherwise all actions would be sins, but the error and defect in the action is the sin. But this error and defect does not come from the general cause, but from the proximate cause, namely from the will of man. Augustine explains this with the example of

limping, which does not spring from the motive power of the soul, but from the dislocation of the leg." (*Loc. de providentia*. § 82-88.)

Luther also cites this example. That a horse limps does not depend on the rider, but on the horse, which is lame. If the horse "is" lame, it will limp, even though the most skilled rider is sitting on it. Nobody can say: Oh, what are you doing? The horse is limping! The rider replies: What can I do about it, I'm not making it limp. So, says Luther, it is with all creatures. God is the rider. If the horse that God rides is good, it goes well — that is the Christians, the children of God —; but if the horse is bad, — even if God rides well — the horse limps. So, even if God is the driving force in all people, he works good; but he does not work evil, he finds evil. This is at the same time a justification of Luther's entire book *De servo arbitrio* ("*The Bondage of the Will*"). So if there are other passages in which Luther speaks as if he believed that God also does evil, this is mere appearance. Just think of the parable of the limping horse. —

Much more could now be said about the relation of God to evil; but here it is only a question of what part, what participation God has in evil. This is, after all, the serious matter and that in which God's honor must be saved. Now one could still say that God also concurs in evil, insofar as he forbids it, insofar as he hinders it, insofar as he punishes it, insofar as he directs it to good, insofar as he shortens it and insofar as he directs it differently than the evil one wants; but here it is a matter of saving God's honor. While we Lutherans firmly believe that God is not idle in any matter, that no one — whether good or evil — stands idly by, we also hold, so help us God, that God himself has no part in evil. We want nothing to do with the Calvinist theory that conflates God with evil.

Question: In what way does the doctrine that God permits evil uphold God's honor, since we humans are usually guilty when we do it? Answer: That we are guilty of this is because we humans have the duty, as God's subjects, to prevent all evil because it is against God. We owe this to God and our neighbor, but God does not owe anything to any creature. Who can demand it of him? Who can hold him accountable? We must all say: No, God, you are not guilty, for you are not subject to anyone.

On the other hand, God will show in eternity that he has brought all evil to a good end. Here we see it only in individual things, for example in the sale of Joseph. It was a wicked deed, and yet Joseph says to his brothers: "As for you, you meant evil against me,

but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today" [Genesis 50:20] We also see this in the most wicked deed of all, the deed of Judas Iscariot, the traitor. No deed has had a more glorious consequence than this. Thus God shows us in a few examples already in this life that he is the great artist who can make something good out of evil. And in eternity we will be amazed, and although the damned in hell will not sing: "Glory to God in the highest!" — but even with regard to hell, all the blessed will praise God and say: "You are not only eternal love, you are eternal holiness, your wrath burns to the lowest hell, you are the Lord of all lords; woe to him who rebels against you! He will finally lie crushed under your feet. **Glory to God! Glory to God! In heaven and in hell!**"

30 [1874 Western District essay by Walther] ^

# Proceedings of the Synod.

At last year's assembly of this district it was decided that we would continue the discussion of the theses in this assembly, which bear the heading:

**"That only through the doctrine of the Lutheran Church is all glory given to God alone, an incontrovertible proof that the doctrine of the same is the only true one."**

For the convenience of the reader, they are repeated here as they follow one another.

Thesis I.

Since religion is the way of worshipping God, the only true religion is that which in all its teachings gives glory to God alone.

Isaiah 42:8, Romans 1:21, 25, John 7:18, 8:49, Luke 2:14, Romans 3:27, 4:20.

Thesis II.

Since a visible church is an assembly of people who "profess one doctrine and religion", only the one that gives glory to God alone through all its teachings is the true one.

Ps 26:8, Rev 14:6, 7, John 5:44.

Thesis III.

Only through the doctrine of the Lutheran Church is all glory given to God alone; this is evident, among other things, from its doctrine:

1. of the Word of God;
2. of the cause of sin, death, hell and damnation;
3. of divine providence;
4. **of the general will of God's grace**; [p. 31]
5. **of the reconciliation and redemption of the human race**; [p. 43]
6. the justification of the sinner by grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ without merit of works;
7. the necessity of regeneration, sanctification and good works;
8. the foundation, validity, power and immutability of the means of grace;
9. of conversion;
10. of the invocation and worship of God;
11. obedience to men in matters of faith and conscience;
12. of the election of grace.

31 [1874 Western District essay by Walther]

Last year, the Synod had reached the third point in the third thesis. After briefly repeating what had been discussed, the fourth point was dealt with: The doctrine "of the general will of God's grace," and showed how in this doctrine, too, the Lutheran Church gives all glory to God alone.

It is true that we could not accuse God if he did not want to save anyone. We could not say to God: You are unjust. It would be very wrong to say: If God is just, he must want to save everyone. If a person wanted to accuse God of not wanting to save everyone, God would say to him: "Who are you, man, that you want to be right with God? You do not know what God must be like." This is a great mistake of modern theology, that one thinks of God without God's Word and then says: This is how he is. It is therefore downright devilish arrogance to say: If God is just, he must want to save everyone.

But we know that he really wants to save all men; he has revealed this to us in his Word; and now we cannot praise God enough that he is such a tender Father that he wants to have mercy on even the most wicked man. The perfection of God, according to which he deserves the highest honor, is that his basic nature is love itself. God is eternal love. If we ask, for the purpose of comparison, in what does the highest perfection of a Christian consist? — The answer is: that he has love in his heart. This is his moral goodness. Love is the fulfillment of the law. No matter how holy a man may appear to be, if love is not in him, not a single commandment will be fulfilled by him. But by being brought back to love, we are brought back to the image of God. Through the doctrine that God's essence is love itself, he is therefore given the highest and all honor. According to Scripture and the confession of our Church, however, God is not like a person who is sometimes friendly, sometimes grumpy, but a being constantly glowing with love. While men rejoice that cruel persecutors of the Church go to hell and are rid of them, God has such a tender heart that his heart breaks against them, and that he still wants to receive them and save them.

This doctrine is clearly stated in our confessional writings. In the

The Formula of Concord, in the 11th article [12] of the Epitome, it says "The fact that many are called and few chosen is not because God does not want to save everyone, but because they either do not hear God's Word at all, but willfully despise it, harden their ears and their hearts, and thus obstruct the proper way of the Holy Spirit, so that he cannot have his work in them;

or, having heard it, they again cast it to the wind and do not heed it; for which it is not God or his election, but their wickedness that is to blame." (The Calvinists and Zwinglians say: You see that these and those are not saved; millions are lost; therefore one cannot judge otherwise than: God does not want them to be saved. Answer: If a man will not hear God's Word, will not go to church, will not even read the Scriptures, but mocks at the holy things, or if, after going to church or reading God's Word, he resists the Holy Spirit, God cannot save him. And the will of God to save him is nevertheless a serious one, i.e. God does not pretend to do so, but it is his real will. He wants to save all, but not to his dishonor, but in such a way that he remains God. A man can enter salvation only through God, and if he entered otherwise, God would cease to be the source of our salvation; and if an ungodly man entered heaven as such, he would not be in heaven. If such a person goes to church once, he will afterwards grumble about the priests and the word he has heard and go to the beer house, for example; he likes it where the devil is served. And if he were forcibly dragged into heaven by God, he would soon long to get out again so that he would have nothing to do with the "the cowards" there. God wants to save you in such a way that he brings you to faith in Christ and gives you a different heart; he also wants to keep you in this renewal until death. Then you can have joy in heaven.

Further it says in the

Formula of Concord: ... "Because all things that are written (as the apostle testifies) are written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope, therefore we reject the following errors: 1. as when it is taught that God does not will that all men should repent and believe the gospel. (2) Again, when God calls us to Himself, that it is not His will that all men should come to Him. 3. that God does not will that everyone should be saved, but that, regardless of their sin, they are ordained to damnation by the mere counsel, purpose, and will of God, so that they cannot be saved." (fol. 250 f. [FC EP XI, 16-19]) Here three pieces of Reformed false teaching are cited, which we reject in our confession and of which the opposite is therefore taught by us. —

Thus the

Augsburg Confession teaches in the Fifth Article (of the Ministry of Preaching): "To obtain such faith, God has instituted the ministry of preaching, given the Gospel and the Sacrament, through which He gives, as a means, the Holy Spirit, who works faith, where and when He wills, in those who hear the Gospel." There it is, say the Reformed, in

your own confession, you Lutherans, that God only wants to have mercy on a small number of people. Answer: It does indeed say: "where and when he wills", but not: in whom he wills. If this were so, God's crown would be taken from his head and we would burn our confession. But the noble Augustana only wants to say this: God alone wants to work faith in people, in all of them without exception, but he does not allow time and place to be dictated to him. Therefore, these words also contain the important admonition: If you want to be saved, don't put it off; don't say: I can still hear God's Word later. But know this: God wants to save you, but not against his order. "When I call you," says God, "answer me; when I greet you, thank me." Thus, according to our confession, God makes no distinction here between people, but only with regard to time and place. But the reason why our confession says that God converts people where and when he wills is because, according to Scripture, it is God alone who works our salvation: "It is God who works in you both to will and to do, according to his good pleasure." Phil. 2:13. But far be it from us to think that God does all things, so that we may be sure, the apostle gives this as the very reason why we should work out our salvation with fear and trembling; for the whole passage is: "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you both to will and to do, according to his good pleasure." The words "where and when" in our confession reject all Pelagian doctrine, according to which it is held that people also do something in order to be converted.

It is well known that some false Lutherans consider our Luther to be a particularist, i.e. someone who believes that God basically only wants to be merciful to some people and have mercy on them and save them. They extract this, like the spider the poison from the sweet flowers, from Luther's writing: "That Free Will is Nothing." [I.e. ***The Bondage of the Will***] Admittedly, if one reads this writing only cursorily, one may well get the idea that Luther believes that God does not want to save everyone; but if one reads it with proper attention, one soon sees that Luther has only one purpose in that writing, to show that God does everything alone in the work of saving a person. In this writing Luther also speaks of a hidden will of God, but in a completely different sense than Zwingli and Calvin. The latter said that God had revealed a will to men with which he was not serious at all; he said that he wanted to have mercy on all, but he was not serious; he actually did not want everyone to believe; Christ had not died and risen for all; and

when God let the preaching of the gospel resound, it was only so that the elect might come to faith. According to Zwingli and Calvin, therefore, God would have spoken differently than he meant; according to them, God would be a hypocrite. But because many things happen that cannot be reconciled with his general will of grace, Luther speaks of a hidden will of God alongside the revealed one, but by no means because the latter really contradicts it.

Luther therefore writes: "Some interpret the words ('Many are called, but few are chosen') thus: 'Many are called', that is, God offers his grace to many, but 'few are chosen', that is, he allows such grace to be bestowed on few, for few are saved by it. This is a godless understanding. For how can it be possible, if one does not think and believe otherwise of God, that he should not become hostile to God because it is only because of his will that we are not all saved? But if you hold this opinion against those who first come to know the Lord Christ, you will find that they are vain, devilish blasphemies. For this reason there is another meaning about this passage: 'Many are called, but few are chosen'. For the preaching of the gospel goes generally and publicly to all who will hear and receive it; and God has it preached so generally and publicly that everyone may hear it, believe and receive it, and be saved." (XIII, 475. F.; [*House Postil*, St. L. 13a, 201])

This is Luther's teaching. Often, of course, Luther flies in that book as high as a solar eagle, so that the sparrows cannot follow; but let him fly, he will come down again in his own time. — "Not everyone," says an old teacher quite rightly, "can walk in Luther's shoes." [Walther flies with Luther.]

Luther also writes: "Human reason conceives an unequal will of God, as if God were like a tyrant who caters to certain favorites who are pleasing to him, whether they be good or less so, and on the other hand he hates the others, they do as they please. So one should not think of God's will." (X, 2001. [St. L. 10, 1710])

Luther thus condemns the assumption of two opposing wills in God. It is true that what God wills must come to pass, rather than everything must perish. But Luther calls the hidden will of God that which God has not revealed to us in his Word and has thus kept to himself, while Calvin and Zwingli call the hidden will of God that according to which God should not seriously will the salvation of men and inwardly think differently than he speaks. They believe that God loves only those who have been chosen by him from eternity to eternal life, but that he hates all others; he has decided that he wants to vent his wrath on them to glorify his righteousness.

35 [1874 Western District essay by Walther]

Luther further writes: "John says: God himself is love, and his nature is pure love; so that if anyone wanted to paint and depict God, he would have to make such an image that would be pure love; as if the divine nature were nothing but a furnace and fiery heat of such love, which fills heaven and earth; and again, if one could paint and depict love, one would have to make such an image that would not be real, nor human, yes, not angelic, nor heavenly, but God himself." (Yes, "God is love", Calvin would scratch out this Bible verse if he could; but he must leave it for the consolation of all poor sinners). ... "He himself has also painted such a picture in nature and his works. For thus also the natural masters" (the naturalists and geologists), "who have experienced and described the nature of animals, say of the little bees that the king among them has no sting at all, even though all the others in the hive cut and sting, and leave their lives over it; but he alone is without wrath. However, even if he does not feel sorry for anyone, nor can he, he must have around him those who can sting and keep him safe, for if he were to go so bare, the foreign bees or bumblebees would kill him: In the image of God there is no wrath in his nature and being, and certainly nothing but pure love and goodness; but that he lets all kinds of plagues go, hail, thunder, fire, water, evil monstrous beasts, famine, war, pestilence, plague and the devil from hell, he needs these as stings around him, so that he remains with his majesty and protects and comforts his own. Otherwise the devil would be too powerful and would seize his honor and crown and dampen his kingdom, so that no one would know what God is and can do, and Christ with his gospel and Christians would be suppressed. Thus you stand, as it is said: God is love; that everyone must see and grasp it if he only opens his eyes. For all his goods are daily before your eyes, wherever you look: sun and moon and the whole sky full of light; the earth full of leaves, grass, grain, and all kinds of plants, prepared and given to you for food; again, father and mother, house, farm, peace, protection and security through the rule of worldly authorities, etc.; and above all, that he gives his dear Son for you and brings you home through the gospel to help you out of all misery and distress. What more could he do for you, or what more or better could you desire? This, I think, is a fire and fervor, that no one can reach such great love with thought. And whoever does not see and respect these things must either be stone blind or stone dead and dying." (Sermon on 1 John 4:16 ff. IX, 1264. 1268. Ff. [St. L. 9, 1682-83, 1686-87)])

Luther also writes: "If you are in danger and temptation, run here and accept Christ, so you will be preserved and not judged (but if you do not want to, you are lost) and let Christ punish you. For when he punishes with His word, He does so that he

may not be condemned. When He says, "Woe to you!" it is so that He may save him and urge him with harsh words to give heed to the love of the Father." (On John 3:17, Erl. Vol. 47:25 [AE 22, 378]).

So when Christ cries out woe over the ungodly, this too, according to Luther, is a voice of his saving love, just as the law and the judgments of God in Scripture and in the history of the world and the church are nothing but proofs of God's love and goodness in desiring the salvation of men. But it is not God's fault that such things are evil to the wicked; just as it is not one's fault if one gives another a knife to cut bread, but the latter misuses it and stabs himself with it. If God's judgments of wrath are pronounced in order to frighten the world in a salutary way, and the world only gets angrier about it, God is not to blame. Of course, these kinds of judgments of wrath only belong to the time of grace; when this is over, the time of wrath begins. Therefore writes

Gerhard: "Every doctrine that aims to promote the glory of God and the mediator of Christ alone, while holding down human pride and arrogance, is truly holy. But now the Evangelical-Lutheran doctrine aims solely at the glory of God and the mediator of Christ, while holding down human pride and presumption. It is therefore truly holy. This principle is proved from John 8:49, where Christ says that He honors and glorifies the heavenly Father through His teaching, and from this proves the truth and holiness of His teaching. .... The other assertion (that the Evangelical-Lutheran doctrine has this characteristic) can be proved by many specific examples. . In the article on predestination we praise the gracious will of God towards all, that he earnestly desires all men to be saved, and for this purpose has sent his Son to the whole world as Savior, and offers the benefits of the same to all in the word of the Gospel. The papists, however, especially the Jesuits, advocate with the Calvinists an unconditional election counsel, by which that gracious will of God against all is denied." (*Loc. theol. de ecclesia, §* 254.)

The Reformed write the following in the

Swiss Confession: "The Scriptures do not refer the purpose of God to have mercy on all individuals, but limit it to the elect alone, with the express exclusion of the rejected, such as Esau, whom God regarded with eternal hatred. Rom. 9:11." (*Form. Consens. Helvet., Corpus Symb. Reform*., p. 447.)

Let us realize how terrible it would be if God did not wish to save all men, but regarded most men

with eternal hatred. If we do not know that God wants to save everyone, we must forever doubt whether we are in a state of grace, whether our faith is right; for what is justifying and saving faith other than the conclusion: God wants all men to be saved, I am a man, therefore he wants me to be saved too? Christ has redeemed all men, I am a man, therefore I too am redeemed? the Holy Spirit calls all men to believe in Christ, I am a man, therefore I too should believe? God forgives the sins of all men and makes all who believe truly saved, I am a man who believes, therefore my sins are forgiven, therefore I too am saved? If one of these preliminary propositions is omitted, then all subsequent propositions are also omitted, so our faith lacks foundation. But even if the individuals whom God wants to save are not named in the Bible, it still says that God wants to save all people, etc. Thus the faith of each individual has an irrefutable foundation.

Furthermore: "The Presbyterians confess in their symbol: “The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of His own will, whereby He extends or withholds mercy, as He pleases, for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures, to pass by; and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praised of His glorious justice." (*The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. of America. Philad*., 1840. p. 21-27 [Also the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chap. III, Art. VI and VII])

According to this article, it would not be true that God is love. He would appear like a tyrant, fattening most men, to slaughter them in his time, i. e. to condemn them.

Some Reformed, the so-called supralapsarians, teach that God, in order to reveal his divine attributes, has decided to create two kinds of people, those in whom he wants to reveal his love and those in whom he wants to reveal his justice and his wrath; to let them all fall, and to arrange it so that they must fall. For those, God has decided, I will send my Son into the world to reconcile them to me; to them I will give my Holy Spirit, compel them to believe by irresistible grace and keep them in it until death. But the others I will not redeem, and therefore I will not lay their sins on my Son; he shall not atone for them, nor suffer, die and rise again for them. I will indeed give the word without distinction, but I will make it ineffective for the rejected, so that they cannot come to faith; at most I will give them a sham faith, but I will not give them the Holy Spirit, I will not call them inwardly, I will not enlighten them, in short, I will not see to it that they are saved. Others, the so-called infralapsarians, say that God did not

originally create anyone for sin and damnation, but, foreseeing the general fall, decided to have mercy on only some of the fallen, to have them redeemed, to call them powerfully, to bring them to faith and to keep them in it, but to pass by all the others with his grace. Through the teaching of the Supralapsarians, Christ's redemption is made an empty spectacle, which could just as well have been absent, since God proceeds according to them entirely at will. But through the teaching of both these and the infralapsarians, God is turned into a hypocritical God and the tears of Christ over Jerusalem into hypocritical tears. What an abominable dishonoring of God!

*) Here begins the protocol written by Pastor Große.

*) What great consolation lies in this teaching that God is love and wants all people to be saved and enjoy his love forever! Severe temptations often arise in the heart. The heart often feels the wrath of God over sin. Then it asks: May I also be comforted by God's love? Am I too, poor worm, redeemed? In such temptations we should point out that such thoughts are truly not to the glory of God, but are a great dishonor to him, who is eternal love itself. If, on the other hand, we overcome such temptations precisely by holding God's general will of grace before us again and again, clinging to it in faith, then we give God all the glory. Therefore, it is the sacred duty of every preacher to work with all faithfulness and diligence to keep the goal constantly before his eyes, so that every single soul entrusted to him may be constantly comforted by God's love and even become divinely certain of his salvation. It is precisely this that the devil primarily seeks to hinder by always plaguing the heart with doubt; from this one can also see how infinitely important and how precious and valuable this very doctrine of God's general will of grace is.

It is true that the Calvinists pretend that they promote God's glory the most through their doctrine by presenting God as a completely free being who can do as he pleases, who can cast away and condemn the one and save the other as he pleases.

Of course, we do not deny that God has the power to act as he pleases. Paul says in Romans 9:20-21: "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" — Indeed, anyone who denies God this power is a damned man! But it is a completely different question: where has God revealed that he wants to act according to this power? Nowhere. Rather, God has revealed that he wants to have mercy on all men; everyone, everyone

shall come and have all his mercy. We may say that if God were to lump us all together and throw us into the abyss of eternal damnation, we would only get what our deeds are worth. But that is not the way God works. He does not send anyone to hell, but people throw themselves into it. God did not actually build hell for people, but for the devils. That is why he once said to the damned: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." [Matt. 25:41] He does not say: prepared for you, but for the devil. There should actually be no place in hell for humans. That's the devil's reasoning. And yet man is so blind and foolish that he himself runs into hell. But God the Lord will not bring such a person out again.

On this point it should also be noted that we say: "Through the doctrine of the Lutheran Church of God's universal will of grace, all glory is given to God alone." For the Universalists say: Yes, you Lutherans do indeed give God great glory through your doctrine of God's universal will of grace — but we give God much more glory by teaching that God, according to his infinite love, finally saves all men, even the ungodly and the unregenerate. But does this honor God? Oh no! Universalists deny the redemption of Jesus Christ. They only speak of a love of God apart from Christ. They obviously claim that God saves people without his justice having been satisfied. They therefore deny God's holiness and righteousness. We, on the other hand, teach that God wants to save all men in a certain order, and not in such a way that it is against God's own nature, because it is against his holiness and justice. What kind of God would that be, who would save people according to his love and in doing so would desecrate and deny his holiness and justice! The unspeakable greatness and glory of God lies precisely in the fact that he only wants and does what is in accordance with his nature. God is holy, therefore he only wills and does holy things. God is goodness itself, therefore he only wants good and only does good. God has given a law that everyone should and must keep. Man has become a sinner and cannot possibly fulfill the law. But God's law must nevertheless be fulfilled. For what would it be if God gave a law, threatened all transgressors with severe temporal and eternal punishment and then spoke when it was broken? Well, it happened once, what good is it? It cannot be changed, I will let people go and not punish them. No, as true as God is God, it is true that his law must still be fulfilled by every human being today. That person who does not fulfill it will not go to heaven. Are we therefore wretched people? Oh no, blessed, exceedingly blessed are we! For in Christ we have a

guarantor who has fulfilled the law in our place. Therefore the Universalists are reprobates when they teach that all men, good and bad, believers and unbelievers, even devils, will finally be saved. With such doctrine, as much as there is in them, they set God aside, make Him a devil, the prince of darkness, the lover of sin and all wickedness. The doctrine of Christianity, however, brings everything into the most beautiful harmony.

It has been pointed out that at the time of the Reformation the two doctrines of God's general will of grace and of the election of grace were taught purely and simply, and yet it was possible that the most abominable false doctrines on precisely these two points arose through Calvinism and became so widespread. Now that, by God's great grace, the pure doctrine has been so gloriously restored to us, we too are certainly in great danger of violating one of these two doctrines in one way or another through the devil's cunning. Let us therefore be diligent in alerting each other to such dangers. To this end, the question was raised: How was it that the Calvinists at the time of the Reformation, with such a bright light of pure doctrine, fell into such darkness of false doctrine? The answer was as follows:

Zwingli and Calvin were philosophers who, like the philosophers of today, wanted to solve the riddle of the world. But at that time they did not dare to do so without the Bible. For at the time of the Reformation, the Bible was still generally regarded as the Word of God. Even though Zwingli and Calvin were philosophers, they always seemed to take the Bible as their basis and thus gathered a crowd of Christians around them; indeed, they were very successful. Calvinism flooded Switzerland, France, England and Holland in particular. Many of the most splendid Lutheran congregations were transformed into Calvinist ones.

The philosopher first creates a system from which he then wants to explain all phenomena. He looks at the world, at dead and living creatures, he compares the history of peoples and individuals and asks himself: How can I reconcile all this with my system? The atheist says: I cannot find a God. It is all nothing. Theists still confess a personal God who created the world and leads it to a certain end. Zwingli and Calvin were also such theists. They presented their doctrine as the solution of the Bible. But this is only a pretense. They saw that the Bible says: "God wants all people to be helped", and yet they also saw that thousands and millions were being lost. In the church they noticed how some people accepted the Word of God, others rejected it — indeed, despite all the preaching, they only got worse and worse. So they thought to themselves: God lets his

word be preached to all and offers his grace to all, but only means those who are to be saved and must therefore be brought to faith; the others are not meant. Therefore, when the Bible uses the word "all" or the expression "without distinction" or when it says: "God wants to save sinners", it always refers only to the elect. So they thought they had happily found the bridge over the abyss for our reason. For it is inexplicable to our reason that the Chinese, for example, who have almost become a civilized people, have been without the preaching of the Gospel for so long. Only a few missionaries have been there from time to time. Our reason speaks: why doesn't God send angels with his Word to every village, to every house in China? If that were to happen, then I would believe that it is God's serious will that all people should be saved. Furthermore, how can I believe that one man lives a shameful life for eighty years and finally converts and is saved, while another lives thirty, forty or fifty years in a godly and god-fearing manner and then falls into fornication, persists in this sin and is eternally damned, or is stabbed to death the very next hour after committing the sin and can no longer convert? Is it not marvelous that God gives that man eighty or ninety years and this man not a quarter of an hour to repent?

There is a father who has buried twelve children in their early childhood. They are all in heaven, and another father has twelve children who fall into unbelief, sin and shame and all go to the devil. Who can rhyme this with our doctrine of God's universal will of grace? See, this is the abyss the Calvinists could not get over. Stop! they thought, we have to build a bridge. But they built a devil's bridge, for they blamed God for not allowing all to be saved, for not forgiving all their sins, for not bringing all to faith. That is why a few go to heaven and the majority to hell. But this is what the devil taught Calvin. Of course, Calvin's doctrine looks like a harmonious whole that solves all the riddles of reason. Reason must consider it an admirable system. Luther's doctrine, on the other hand, fits reason neither back nor front. Of course, the apostles and prophets are to blame for this, and if we want to go even further, we must blame God himself, who gave it to the prophets and apostles. But that is God's pedagogy, i.e. how God teaches in the world. You should not know this, you arrogant spirits, says God. Wait in humility and the fear of God and accept my Word with simplicity. Then you will know everything later. In eternity you will speak: Yes, God, you are eternal love! You have done everything to save this man, but he could not be saved." —

Therefore we ask nothing about the harmonious whole of Calvin's doctrine. For Calvin is quite the same as our modern philosophers, except that he still cites Bible verses for his cause. These philosophers, such as Kant, Schelling, Hegel, are therefore actually better, for they do not attach Bible verses to their philosophy. —

So what do we have to be particularly careful of? That we do not seek a doctrine that forms a system, like philosophy. Philosophy is a closed system of doctrine. It begins with a supreme proposition from which everything is developed. Christianity, however, is not such a science. Rather, there are as many passages in Holy Scripture as there are principles. Here it says: God wants all men to be helped; in another place, that most will perish. There it is written that it is God alone who converts men, and here it is said that man himself is to blame if he is lost. Now let us not start with one principle and judge everything by it. The devil will thank us if we want to bring a connection into these sayings that God has not made. Of course, we Missourians are therefore despised as stupid people who have left science in Germany and roam around here like wild Indians. In Germany, on the other hand, no one is despised who brings even the most horrible teachings into a system. If he only proceeds in a strictly philosophical manner, it means: respect for the great theologian! But the future will reveal by what kind of teaching the church has been built and the glory of God has been promoted. May God keep us only in humble faith.

*) Continuation of the minutes of Secretary Kleppisch.

*) Finally, it was noted on the fourth point: the doctrine of God's general will of grace seems to contradict reality. We see that many children are deceived and lost, and that millions of Gentiles do not come to faith because they have never been given a spark of the Gospel. But it is important to note that there is a mystery here which will only be revealed to us in eternal life. Rambach says in: "Erläuterung über Freylinghausen's Grundlegung der Theologie", a humble man is content with the general statement: "God wants all men to be helped", a very angry man is punished by having to worry in vain with a thousand doubts.

Before the Synod proceeded to the discussion of the 5th point in the 3rd Thesis, the question was put to them whether it was not advisable to discuss the 12th point (of election by grace) now, since the Iowans continued to maintain that only the leaders in our Synod held the doctrine of predestination (election by grace)

presented in our journals, while the other Synod members held a different doctrine. But since we can only really recognize how the Lutheran Church gives all glory to God alone in the doctrine of election by grace when we have gone through the other doctrines that precede it in the third thesis, and since the mouths of the Iowans cannot be stopped even by the most compelling reasons from God's Word, it was resolved to maintain the stated order.

In the fifth point we hear how the Lutheran Church also gives all glory to God alone in its doctrine of the reconciliation and redemption of the human race. This doctrine is now without doubt the crown of all Christian doctrine and the real triumph of the Christian religion. All religions show man a way in which he can escape the misery of sin and become blessed and happy. But while all religions except the Christian religion show man how he must do this himself in order to come out and be saved, the Christian religion, on the other hand, teaches not only how people are to be eternally saved one day, but how they are already saved. According to the teachings of the Christian religion, man is already redeemed, already freed from sin and all misery, and God is already reconciled with him. The Christian religion says to man: You do not need to redeem yourself and reconcile God with yourself. Christ has already done all that for you. Nothing is left for you but to believe this, that is, to accept it. This is precisely what distinguishes the Christian religion from all other religions. The Jew says: If you want to become righteous, you must keep the law of Moses; the Turk says: If you want to be saved, you must follow the Koran; the Papists say: If you want to go to heaven, you must do good works, repent of your sins and do enough for them yourself, and if you want to get really high, go into a monastery; and all sects that falsify Christianity without exception impose something on man that he must do in order to become righteous and saved before God. The Lutheran Church, on the other hand, says to man according to God's Word: Everything has already been done; you are already redeemed, you are already justified before God, you are already saved; therefore you have nothing to do to redeem yourself first, and you do not have to reconcile God with yourself and earn your salvation first. You only have to believe that Christ, the Son of God, has already done all this for you, and through this faith you shall be made partaker of it and be saved. To be saved by faith means to be saved by the righteousness of another, namely Christ, in that it becomes man's own property. Thus, by ascribing the reconciliation and redemption of all people to God alone and denying and taking away everything from man, the Lutheran church also gives him alone all the glory in this doctrine.

God, on the other hand, is deprived of his glory

1. by the papists, who teach that one must become righteous before God and earn heaven by doing the law. They say that through baptism one receives forgiveness for original sin; but if one sins after baptism, one must then do enough before God. [See here.]

2. by the Calvinists, who teach that Christ only reconciled God with the elect and redeemed them.

3. by all enthusiasts. They say: Christ has redeemed you on condition that you become a new man, that you are born again, that you hate sin. According to their teaching, man is only redeemed and God is only reconciled with him when he has redeemed himself and reconciled God with himself.

We Lutherans, on the other hand, teach, as I said, that the whole world is already redeemed through Christ, the whole work is already finished; but faith is the hand that makes redemption one's own. Thus it says in the

Formula of Concord: "God has decreed in his purpose and counsel, 1. that **the human race** is truly redeemed and reconciled to God through Christ, who by his innocent obedience, suffering and death has earned for us the righteousness that is valid before God and eternal life." (FC SD 11, 14-15)

So this is not the Lutheran doctrine that Christ, through his fulfillment of the law, through his suffering, death and resurrection, has brought it about that the good Lord now regards faith as something so excellent and high that it is for the sake of it that we must first be reconciled with man. On the contrary, the Lutheran Church teaches that everything that was necessary to reconcile and redeem us happened through Christ. Christ suffered in the place of all humanity and acquired the righteousness that is valid before God. When Christ suffered, all men suffered in him, for he suffered in their place. When he hung on the cross, all hung on the cross in him; when he died, we died, and when he rose again, we rose again. When God says to us in his Word: Sins are excluded from the kingdom of heaven, they must be atoned for; we can now answer: In Christ my sins have already been atoned for; he has done enough for them as my substitute. If God says in his Word, "But the law must be fulfilled," we can now answer, "It has already been fulfilled in Christ. If God says in his Word, "You must die because of your sin," we can answer, "I have already died: I have already died, for I hold to your word, since you say, "If one died for all, they all died" (1 Cor. 5:14). If God says in his Word, "If you want to go to heaven, you must be righteous," we can answer: Christ carried my sins to the grave and came out of the grave righteous in my place. He is my substitute and surety in his suffering, death, and

shedding of blood: so is he also in his resurrection. To this, of course, the sects and enthusiasts say: Then, you think, there is no need to do good works. But we answer: Good works should be done, but not to propitiate God, not to redeem oneself, not to obtain forgiveness of sins and the adoption of God, but out of gratitude to Christ and God for the redemption that has taken place. After all, what I do to gain a reward is not a good work at all. It is very important that the testimony quoted from the Formula of Concord does not say that the human race is truly to be redeemed and reconciled with God, but rather: "redeemed and reconciled with God." Therefore, for example, writes

Calov writes: "All men are liberated, as far as God's and Christ's purpose is concerned, by the freedom acquired for all through Christ; but the fact that some do not actually enjoy it is not because Christ died for all, as if all had already died, but rather that they subsequently make themselves guilty of death in another way." (*Socinismus profligatus*, p. 386.)

What is most important here is that Calov says: "that subsequently", after they have been redeemed, "they are guilty of death in another way." In Christ they are all redeemed, in Christ they are all reconciled, in Christ they have already acquired salvation, in Christ they are already saved. That is why the damned in hell will one day have to say: I did not go to hell because I was not saved, but God had given me everything in Christ that makes a person saved. I did not go to hell because I was such a great sinner, for my sins were blotted out by Christ; but I was cast out because I did not want to accept the salvation I had received from God's hand, because I did not want to believe.

The same Calov writes: "We are not redeemed, reconciled, or reconciled to our sins on any condition, but unconditionally, perfectly, completely, as far as the merit and acquisition is concerned; although, as far as the actual fruit and appropriation is concerned, faith is necessary; which is nothing else than the appropriation of that desacralization, satisfaction, and reconciliation of Christ. For if one died for all, it is the same (in God's judgment) as if all had died. 2 Cor. 5, 15." (*Biblia illustrata ad Rom*. 5, 10 )

We should not say to people: You are saved on the condition that you believe; but the other way around: Because Christ has redeemed you, you can now believe that you have been saved. No one believes that he will receive an inheritance because it is to be promised to him first, but because it has already been promised to him. So also here: Not the belief that one is first to be redeemed is the right, saving faith, but the faith that accepts the redemption that has already happened through Christ.

Therefore, as certain as the Gospel is the doctrine that tells us that man has been reconciled and redeemed, it is also certain that redemption and reconciliation have already taken place. The enthusiasts say that this is why one is saved through faith, because through it one receives a different heart, becomes holy and pious. Of course, it is true that faith must result in all these things, otherwise it is not true faith. But the honor of salvation or redemption is not due to faith as a work of man or for the sake of its good qualities and consequences, but I am to believe that I am redeemed because Christ has already redeemed me. Therefore I am to believe that God is reconciled to me, because God in Christ has already reconciled himself to me. Therefore I should believe that my sins are forgiven because they have already been forgiven in Christ. It is therefore terrible when the sects say: I have all this on condition that I do something to bring it about.

Kromayer writes: "In the article of Christ we give God the glory of mercy that he has had mercy on us all and has bestowed in his Son an admirable means of regaining salvation." (*Scrutin. religionum, etc.* p. 334.)

Quenstedt writes: "As Christ reconciled God to us by dying for us on the cross; so he reconciles us to God by virtue of his death, by converting us through the word of the cross." (*Theol. I*, 435).

God is already reconciled with us through Christ's suffering and death; no one needs to reconcile Him with himself now. God is no longer angry with mankind. That is why 2 Cor. 5 does not say: Let God be reconciled to you, but: "Be reconciled to God." [2 Cor. 5:20] That is, you believe that God is angry with you, but he is not angry. If you do not believe this, then he is certainly an angry God to you. For as I believe God, so He is. If I believe that God is gracious to me, he is gracious to me; if I believe that he is ungracious to me, he is ungracious to me. That is, God is gracious to me through Christ's redemption; and through faith, by virtue of which I place my trust in such redemption, God's grace becomes mine. On the other hand, God is ungracious to me if I reject the reconciliation that has taken place through unbelief.

Luther therefore writes: "If Scripture says that God is angry, it is nothing other than that he is felt to be so." (Erlanger Bd. 33, 168 [St. L. 3, 143]) "As the conscience holds itself against God, so is He. If you think He is gracious, then He is gracious; if you fear Him as a terrible judge, then He is... Because this is how it changes between me and Him, even though God's nature otherwise remains unchanged. But everything is to be done for the sake of faith." (ibid., 237 [ibid, p. 202 f.])

Luther further writes: "Now this is the benefit of Christ's suffering and resurrection,

that he did it not for himself, but for the whole world, that he trampled the devil and my sins, which clung to him on silent Friday, under foot, that the devil also flees before the name of Christ. If then thou wilt have need of such great goods, well, he hath already given them thee: do him so much honor, and accept them with thanksgiving." (XII, 2048 [St. L. 12, 1586])

All these glorious goods: righteousness, life, salvation, are already there, Christ has already given them to mankind with his Gospel, as Luther also says in the 95 Theses. "The true treasure of the churches," it says in the 62nd thesis, "is the holy gospel of the glory and grace of God." [*AE* 31, 31] The point is simply that we need these glorious goods. What use is it to us if we keep bodily goods that are given to us in boxes and crates and do not need them? It is the same here in the spiritual realm: The glorious goods of Christ have already been given to us; remember, they have already been given to us, and they are always there for us, even if we do not believe. If I take something that has not been given to me and that is not for me, it is wrong; I am a thief. But forgiveness of sin, righteousness, life and salvation, these heavenly goods, are not only offered to us like a commodity for sale, but they are already given and bestowed upon us. That is why Luther says here: "If you want such great goods, well, he has already given them to you: just do him so much honor and accept them with thanksgiving."

The enthusiasts now say: "Not only the Lutheran Church, but we also believe that Christ has redeemed the whole world and reconciled it with God, and that redemption is complete." But what they say is not true. Why do they rage so fiercely against the teaching of the divine Word on Baptism, Absolution and the Lord's Supper? Why do they rage and blaspheme when we say: sins are forgiven in Baptism, sins are forgiven through the mouth of the preacher in Absolution and in the preaching of the Gospel, and in Holy Communion we are not only given the body and blood of Jesus Christ to eat and drink, but also forgiveness of sins? To this they say: Then, of course, it would be easy to go to heaven if one obtained forgiveness of sins by a little water or by eating and drinking or by the preacher opening his mouth. But in doing so they immediately indicate that they do not believe that Christ has in fact and truth redeemed the whole world through his suffering and death on the cross and reconciled it completely with God. The heavenly goods which Christ has acquired for us are presented to us in Baptism, in Absolution, in the general preaching of the gospel, in the Lord's Supper, just as, to use an image, physical, edible things are presented to us on a wooden plate. Then

the fanatic says: What use is the wooden plate to me? Why, because he does not believe what is on it? He is against the means of grace because he does not believe in grace itself. Yes, says the enthusiast, I cannot believe that God gives such great goods through such small, insignificant means. To this serve for answer: This is precisely because you do not believe that Christ has acquired forgiveness of sins and God's grace for all men; for if Christ has acquired such goods, will he leave us without means by which he makes those goods our own? Certainly not. So that we do not need to ascend to heaven and fetch the Lord Christ and his goods from there, He wants to be in the Word and everywhere where his Word is practiced. He has placed all his goods in Baptism, in Absolution, in the Word of the gospel, in Holy Communion. Can you, says Christ to the redeemed, therefore lack the assurance of the forgiveness of your sins? No, you can now be completely sure of God's grace. Baptism is my hand, Absolution is my hand, the Lord's Supper is my hand, the Gospel is my hand, with which I give you these great and glorious goods. And it is not an empty hand, but a hand filled with all kinds of spiritual goodness. We humans should truly rejoice, sing and leap when we hear this from the mouth of Christ. But that we are so lazy and cold to hear the Word of the Gospel; that we value so little the absolution pronounced by the preacher; that we have so little desire to partake of Holy Communion: this is because we do not believe in the reconciliation of the whole human race through Christ and its fruit. The reason why we are always so full of doubts, why we struggle with our many worries, why we are disillusioned, at odds with God and the world and dissatisfied with our situation in the world, is always because we do not believe that God is reconciled with us through Christ, that salvation is already prepared for us and that it is offered to us in the means of grace. The only difference here between us Christians and the enthusiasts is that our faith is so weak that we cannot grasp the greatness of Christ's good deed as we should, while the enthusiasts blaspheme and trample this heavenly truth underfoot. They do say: We agree with you Lutherans on the main point of Christianity; we believe just as well as you do that Christ is the Savior and Redeemer of all men and that he has brought about a perfect reconciliation; we only differ on secondary points, which do not matter much, such as the Lord's Supper, Baptism, and Absolution. We cannot believe what you teach because it is contrary to our reason. But if that were really the real reason why the enthusiasts here disagree with us,

we would soon agree with them. But that is by no means the real reason. They confess, for example, that they believe in the triune God; but this article is the greatest mystery to human reason. They also believe that God created the whole world out of nothing. Why then do they not believe in the power of Absolution, Baptism and the Lord's Supper? — Because they do not believe from the bottom of their hearts that Christ has redeemed and reconciled the whole world and purchased righteousness, forgiveness of sins, God's grace and eternal life for all people. Would to God that we ourselves had grasped this doctrine in a truly living way! We preachers in particular should call upon God daily to equip us to proclaim this doctrine with great joy, so that our listeners may recognize the great goods of salvation by faith and be compelled to exclaim after every sermon: "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messengers who proclaim peace, who preach good news, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, 'Your God is King! Isaiah 52:7: They shall not preach: If you do such and such, if you do such and such, you will be freed from your sins: The letter is here, God is reconciled, you are already freed from your sins, God now looks with favor on the whole human race. It is true that most people retain the wrath of God; but this is not because God is really still angry with them for their sins, but because they do not want to believe. This is why the Savior says: "He who does not believe the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God will remain on him." John 3:36 We say: I must first become another man, for I cannot come before God as I am; — but no! First you must believe that Christ has completely redeemed you from all your sins, only then can things change with you. "Your blood, the noble sap, has such strength and power that even a tiny drop can cleanse the whole world, even set it free, and liberated from the devil's jaws."

Another proof that the enthusiasts do not believe this doctrine is this: When they, e.g. the Methodists and the Presbyterians, especially the new school, have worked on a person and brought him to the point where, full of desire for grace and deliverance from sin, he does not know how to be helped, weeps, sighs, wrings his hands, they do not ask him: What do you believe? — but rather: *How do you feel?* If a man says that he feels well, then according to them Jesus is there; if he does not feel well, then he is not yet there; so they go on with the work until he has a feeling as if Jesus is there. But if a person is crushed by the law of God and is therefore ready to repent, they should point him to Christ and say, "Only believe! As soon as you believe, you have all the goods of Christ. You are already redeemed; forgiveness is already obtained for you; it is offered to you in every word of the gospel; you are baptized, and

in Baptism God has already given you all the benefits of Christ and made an eternal covenant of grace with you: hold fast to this! and now go to the Lord's Supper to strengthen your faith; for there the most precious pledge of God's grace is given into your mouth, the ransom itself paid for all the sins of all men, the Son of God's body and blood. But this is precisely what they lack, and make repentance the means of reconciliation with God. But the repentance that was necessary to earn God's grace for us was already made by Christ in Gethsamene, when he bore the sins of all the world and sweated a bloody sweat for their sake. It is only because we are so full and disgusted with the means of grace that God must first crush us with his law and work repentance over sin in our hearts. For only then does grace taste good. Therefore, and only therefore, does God work repentance in man.

Luther therefore writes: "The enthusiasts of today also all practise the first commandment; they say: We also proclaim grace and mercy through Christ, and do not reject the article of the first commandment; and say, I, Lutherus, am lying to them." (Here Luther declares the doctrine of reconciliation and redemption, of the grace and mercy of God, to be the article of the first commandment; for: How does the first commandment begin? "I am the Lord your God." These are evangelical words. For if God is my God, I must be righteous before him, I must have forgiveness of my sins. And because these words belong in the Gospel, Luther also omitted them from the first commandment in his catechism). "But stand by them: they confess Christ died, who hung on the cross and saved us, that is true; but they deny that by which we receive him, that is, the means, the way, the bridge and the path, which they break off." .... The enthusiasts also say much about God, about the forgiveness of sins and God's grace, and also that Christ died: but how I receive Christ and how grace comes to me, that I receive it, that we come together, they say: The Spirit alone must do it; they lead me astray; they say that the outward and oral word, baptism and sacrament are of no avail, and yet they preach about grace. This is to proclaim the treasure to me, and to speak well of it, but to take away the key and the bridge by which I am to come to the treasure." (III, 2501. F. [*St. L.* 3, 1692 f.]) Of course God wants to seal His grace in me, but only through the Word. And the Holy Spirit wants to testify in the heart; but this also happens through the Word; otherwise I could not know whether it is the Holy Spirit or the feelings of my own heart. Whoever, at the hour of death, does not keep to the Word but to the "spirit", has only a phantom, a figment of the imagination, and must go to hell.

51 [1874 Western District essay by Walther]

Gerhard also writes concerning the Reformed (Calvinists): "Against the honor of the high priestly office of Christ the Calvinists offend: 1. In that by their dangerous allöosis they refer Christ's suffering, which he endured for the sins of the whole world, solely to his human nature. For if this is certain, then the merit of Christ cannot have its value and efficacy, since Christ's suffering is the most perfect satisfaction for sins precisely because it is not the suffering of a mere man, but of a God-man, that is, of the Son of God himself, who endured it in his assumed human nature." (*Disput. theol*. I, 160. ff.)

For Zwingli first said that when it says in Scripture that "God purchased his church by his own blood", or "the Jews crucified the Lord of glory" and "killed the Prince of life", or "God gave up his own Son", we should not take the words as they read, but that here we find the figure of alloeosis, i.e. the way of speaking, since one says something quite different from what one means by his words. The Calvinists then followed him and said: When it says: "Christ" has suffered, it is meant to say: Only his humanity suffered. But that is just as foolish as saying that a person has died: Not the man, but only his body has died; for when man dies, body and soul are separated from each other, and so the death of man also affects his soul. So also here with Christ. Christ is the true God and eternal life and at the same time true man. Now, according to Scripture, the whole Christ, the God-man, died, of course according to human nature; just as a man dies, but according to the body. Thus the Son of God truly suffered for sins, shed his holy and precious blood and redeemed mankind. If only that which was human in Christ had died, then redemption would not be valid; for the blood of man cannot reconcile God with the whole world, the death of man cannot earn forgiveness of the sins of all the world and make all the world righteous, but only the blood of God and the death of God can do this. But if we say that, according to the Calvinists, only a mere man died for mankind, this is not wrongly attributed to the Calvinists, but the following words of Calvin clearly prove that he considered the suffering and death of Christ to be merely the suffering and death of a man. Calvin blasphemously writes thus: "I confess that if someone wanted to oppose Christ to God's judgment per se, there would be no merit, because in a man (!) the worthiness would not be found that could earn God's favor. Therefore, when we speak of Christ's merit, the root cause is not placed in him, but we

ascend to the fact that God has so ordained it, which is the first cause." (*Institutes II*, 17, 1.) Calvin's meaning is: Whoever would rely only on the fact that Christ died and shed his blood, and would therefore be certain of his salvation, would draw a false conclusion; for a "man" (namely Christ) cannot earn forgiveness of sins for all men before God. God, he wants to say, accepts the suffering and death of Christ only as a perfect satisfaction for the absolute election of grace; in fact, it has no such high value and worthiness as to be able to take away sins. And why does Calvin think this? Because, according to his false doctrine of predestination, he attributes it only to the unconditional eternal counsel of God that God brings a man to heaven, not to Christ's truly perfect satisfaction. Here it also becomes obvious that the true Reformed do not believe that Christ is true God and man in one person.

Gerhard continues: "2. by placing the ground of merit in a mere approval of the Father, which follows from the first doctrine." (That is, the Reformed believe that Christ's suffering and death have such great power only because God so approves of it; as if God thought: "The satisfaction of the man Christ is admittedly small compared to the great and many sins, but I will accept it in this way. — But this is the glory of God's righteousness, that men could not enter heaven until all their sins were truly and completely blotted out by the suffering and death of the Son of God).

Gerhard continues: "3. by denying that Christ's merit and satisfaction was for all men without exception, but claiming that it was provided only for a few by unconditional decree. (4) In that some of them exclude the active obedience of Christ from meritorious causes." (That Christ lived so holy and fulfilled the law, some Calvinists say, he had to do so because he was also a man. But because Christ was a man who was also God, he was not subject to any law. But he allowed himself to be put under the law so that he might acquire for us the righteousness that we lacked. Thus, not only the suffering obedience of Christ, but also his active obedience benefits us).

Gerhard continues: "5 Some of them think that Christ has earned something for himself." (They claim this because they do not believe that Christ is true God and man in one person).

Finally, Gerhard says: "6. in that some of them ascribe salvation to the Gentiles without

the faith that takes Christ's merit; for if the Gentiles are saved without Christ's merit, then this was not necessary for our salvation." (*Disputation, theol. I,* 160 ff.) Yes, then we Christians would be worse off than the Gentiles. It would then be better if we had not heard the gospel. An honorable life would then also be sufficient to be saved. Zwingli writes that he hopes to see Cicero, Aristides, Theseus, Numa Pompilius and Hercules again in heaven. (A pious jurist has said with reference to this: I do not wish to go to heaven, where Hercules is supposed to be with his club).

Concerning redemption itself, the Methodist Nast writes blasphemous words in his explanation of the Gospel of Luke, p. 213: "The idea that 'the suffering Son of God really had to feel the wrath of the Father and taste the torment of hell, yes, that God's wrath made Christ suffer just as much as the whole world of sinners deserved', we consider unfounded in God's Word." — But as our surety, Christ had to pay and atone for our sins, and since he proclaimed on the cross, "It is finished," we know that he paid and atoned for them in full. But the enthusiasts say: Not so. — Of course, if we could not rely on the word of Christ, "It is finished," no Christian could say, "Christ has done enough for every one of my sins. —

We should rejoice and leap for joy that we have recognized the blessed truth and can preach it in our church. What a grace of God! Only in the Lutheran Church is this truth taught. What an incentive for us to continue confidently in the work of the Lord! While we are blasphemed and reviled by the enthusiasts and false Lutherans because of this doctrine, we have the joyful awareness that God has given us an unspeakable grace with this doctrine. For this teaching is pleasing to God. How confident we can be in our work and our struggle! We have a doctrine that seeks God's glory, while the counter-doctrine reviles and blasphemes God.

God created the world for His glory and placed man in it solely to seek and promote the glory of God. But through the fall into sin, God's glory has been taken away. How can man now come to restore the glory of God? God himself has ensured that he can be honored by man again. Although the sparks of God's glory still shine in nature, this is nothing compared to the work of redemption. Here God has been restored to his full glory. Christ has reconciled God with us and taken away everything from us humans that diminishes his glory: all sins, the curse of the law, death and eternal

damnation. And only where this is preached is the glory of God rightly proclaimed. God has revealed his glory through nothing so gloriously as through the redemption and reconciliation of the whole human race. Christ bore all sins, both original sin and all other sins. That is why we confess in the interpretation of the Second Article: "He has redeemed, purchased and won me, the lost and condemned man, from all sins, from death and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with his holy and precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death." [*Triglotta* p. 545] So God has not, as the enthusiasts say, only done something for the redemption of all people, so that his work is incomplete and we still have to do something in addition.

That is why this thesis also says: "Only through the Lutheran doctrine of the reconciliation and redemption of the human race is all glory given to God alone." For by means of all the aforementioned obscurations of this doctrine by the enthusiasts, God's honor is attacked. And that is also what the devil wants. In paradise, through his false doctrine, he would have led men to rob God of his glory, and now that God has shown his love to men in such abundance and thereby regained his glory, he seeks to obscure, indeed, to destroy the word that reveals this through the enthusiasts and false Lutherans. Sometimes he does not want Christ to be God, sometimes he wants Christ not to have suffered and died for all men; he is always trying to undermine that blessed teaching here and there.

But that the enthusiasts do not believe in a complete redemption is also evident from the fact that faith is held in such low esteem among them. We preach about faith because Christ is then preached. Everyone should only say yes and amen to such preaching: — that is what God wants from us. That is why the angels at the birth of the world's Redeemer and Reconciler know nothing else to proclaim than: "Glory to God in the highest"! Only then do they cry out: "Peace on earth and good will to men." The holy inhabitants of heaven knew that God's glory, which the devil had deceived people into robbing, would now be restored. This is why we also read in Scripture that the angels are attributed a special joy in the Gospel. 1 Peter 1:12 reads: "Which also the angels delight to behold." For even in heaven there is probably no work by which God is more honored than the incarnation of the Son of God. That is why Christ says with great wonder: "God so loved the world." He gives his Son to the godless, cursed world, which has become hostile to God, and lets him suffer shame, death and the torments of hell for it. O great, incomprehensible love of God! —

But that the Calvinists expressly deny the perfection of redemption and reconciliation is evident from the fact that, among others,

the Presbyterians confess: "No other is redeemed by Christ, powerfully called, justified, brought to adoption, sanctified and made blessed, except the elect alone." (*The Constitution etc.*, p. 22.)

*) Written Mr. Pastor Große.

*) The Swiss Confession further states: "He (Christ) alone, according to the Father's counsel and of his own free will, went to meet the dreadful death for the elect; he alone brought them back into the fold of the Father's grace; he alone reconciled them with God the Father, who was offended, and freed them from the curse of the law." (*Formula Consensus Helvetica*, see *Corpus lib. symb. Reform. Edit. Augusti* p. 450 ) And in another place it says: "It is also rightly said that it is his (God's) will that everyone, whoever sees the Son and believes in him, should have eternal life. (John 6:40) Although this "everyone" is only the elect, and although God has not made a general decree without the determination of persons, and Christ therefore did not die for all individuals, but only for the elect who were given to him, he nevertheless wants that to be generally true which follows from his special and definite decree (*ex speciali et deninito ejus consilio*). But that, when the will of God is thus generally presented in the outward calling, only the elect believe, but the rejected (*reprobi*) are hardened, this comes solely from the *discriminating* grace of God." (*L. C. p.* 454. f.)

What a shameful hypocrisy it is when they first say: "It is also rightly said that it is God's will that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him, should have eternal life"! Thus they present themselves as if they were one with us Lutherans. But they immediately add: "Although this 'everyone' alone is the elect." But you cannot know that you are an elect, for you have not been in God's council chamber and have not found your name in the Book of Life, nor do you find it in the Bible. But the truth is that you are leading poor sinners by the nose. If God had only redeemed the elect, why should he not have said so in his Word? For if only two criminals in a penitentiary are to be pardoned and I am to bring them the message, I will not say: all the criminals in this penitentiary are pardoned. The whole world is also one big penitentiary. We humans are all poor, lost, damned sinners. And yet God has commanded to preach to all that they are all pardoned. — But the Calvinists say: No, these "all", these "everyone" find only the elect. Then the condemnation of many does not come from the fact that they recklessly resist, but the grace of God

makes the difference. In one person it gives power to the word so that the sinner accepts it and believes. With another, grace withdraws so that the sinner remains in unbelief and is condemned. What a terrible doctrine, by which all honor is taken from God! Thus the Reformed deny what all angels have admired for nearly two thousand years and will marvel at for all eternity, what has hitherto been the theme of their heavenly songs. Luke 2:14.

But there is one more thing we must be aware of in this matter of the redemption of the whole world, by which God is robbed of all glory, as by nothing else: It is the ungodly doctrine of the Romans concerning the sacrifice of the Mass. The sacrifice of the Mass is the greatest abomination of papism. While Christ called down from the cross: “It is finished” — the nefarious priests of the Antichrist say: It is not yet finished. We must now repeat the sacrifice until the Last Day. Whoever wants to be saved, let him pay, then we will sacrifice Christ for him in an unbloody way. And they declare this to be the greatest, most glorious and most exquisite work. Campegius said: He would rather be torn to pieces than give up the Mass. The devil also knows very well why he preserves and elevates the Mass so powerfully, namely to remove Christ's sacrifice from the church. Christ's sacrifice is said to have been nothing but an empty spectacle. Christ may have sacrificed himself once, but now he must be sacrificed a million times and this sacrifice has the same power as Christ's atoning sacrifice. Every priest must say Mass at least once a day. Some do it thirty times. What an atrocious desecration of Christ's sacrifice!

Our Church also confesses this in the Apology: "We teach that the one sacrifice of Christ on the cross was sufficient for the sin of the whole world, and that we have no need of any other sacrifice for sin." (Ap 13, 8, *Triglotta* p. 311)

Further: "It is the greatest dishonor and blasphemy of the Gospel and of Christ that the evil work of the Mass *ex opere operato* should be a sacrifice which propitiates God and is sufficient for sins; it is a most horrible, ugly preaching and teaching, and a great unspeakable abomination, that the evil work of a priest should be counted as much as the death of Christ." (Ap 24, 89; *Triglotta* p. 415)

Truly, it is impossible to say with the tongue of man what an abomination the Mass is. The wretched priest, the child of the devil, comes along and says: "Oh yes, Christ's sacrifice has brought much benefit, but the main thing remains that we sacrifice him again every day. Thus the wretched man says to Christ: Your little suffering on Golgotha is not enough, you must now be sacrificed in many thousands of places. The Romans therefore also call the mass: *sacrificium propitiatorium*, i.e. a

sacrifice of atonement. Such a lousy clergyman and knave of shame, who perhaps lives daily in fornication, elevates himself to a Savior of sinners, who can offer an atoning sacrifice that is to complement Christ's sacrifice, indeed to a greater Savior than Christ is. For he who can offer such a sacrifice must be a greater Savior than Christ. Christ had to sacrifice himself with much suffering and bitter death. But the Roman priest only says a few words and the story is finished in a flash: the sacrifice is offered. In describing his journey to Rome, Luther recounts that in Italy the priests had already said seven masses before the devout Luther had finished one, and then mockingly called out to him: *Passa, passa* (quickly, quickly), send our dear lady's son home again soon. This gave Luther, who was still trapped in popedom, a stab in the heart. He thought to himself at the time: How! If the pope himself were so reckless in Rome, how finely you would be deceived! As he thought, so he found. For the priests were nothing but mockers of religion, who ridiculed the people for giving their money for such a game. If it were not for the money, the mass would have been abolished long ago, for it is inconvenient for the lazy priests, since the law exists: The priest must be sober if he wants to say mass. This is why many a priest hastens to say Mass so early so that he can eat and drink soon.

Gerhard also writes about this abomination of the sacrifice of the Mass: "1. Scripture ascribes this honor to Christ, that He is the one and only, actually so-called high priest and priest, apart from whom no one offers a propitiatory sacrifice, whom God has made the only example of all Levitical priests. But the Papists, besides this one so-called priest of the New Testament, make innumerable others subordinate (*secundarios*) priests, teaching that Christ's body and blood are offered daily in the Mass in an unbloody manner by the priests of the Mass for sins, and that they make their priests of the Mass mediators between God and men, whose sacrifice has the same validity as the one sacrifice of Christ offered on the altar of the cross. 2. Sacred Scripture ascribes to Christ the honor of having offered himself once for us as a gift and sacrifice, to God as a sweet savor. The Papists say that Christ is still sacrificed often and daily at Mass. 3. Scripture ascribes this honor to this single offering of Christ, that it is the perfect propitiation for sins. The Papists, however, teach that Christ is still offered daily to God in the Mass for the attainment of reconciliation." (*Disputat. theol. I*, 60. f.)

The Mass is therefore the real hellish core of the antichristian papacy. If one wishes to save a Catholic, one should seek above all to make him realize that the Mass is the most horrible abomination

on the whole earth. Luther therefore rightly says of himself when he was made a priest to sacrifice for the living and the dead and read his first mass: "That the earth did not swallow us up was due to an all too great patience on God's part."

Even in the Heidelberg Catechism there is a special question about the Mass. In the answer, the Mass is called an abominable idolatry. Of course, Ursinus and Olevianus did not write this question and answer themselves. For when they brought the first copy of the Heidelberg Catechism to the Elector for his perusal, he declared that there was no question about the Mass. Since the Elector was a mighty lord, they did not dare to object and allowed this question to be included. Now in America, however, this question has been thrown out again as an annoying and offensive matter. And yet this alone is the best thing in the entire Heidelberg Catechism.

The Synod recognized that it was extremely important and necessary to deal with the Mass in greater detail and therefore decided to have theses on the greatest abomination of the sacrifice of the Mass drawn up for the next sessions and, as soon as the discussion of the present theses was finished, to base a detailed discussion on them.

The Synod also pointed out that in most of the sermons of the modern preachers the doctrine of salvation is so much neglected. Indeed, there are quite a few Lutherans who believe that this doctrine should be handled with care; this would only make the listeners safe. One should preach more about conversion. But how did the Reformation of the Church come about? How are people converted? By giving God the glory he has given himself in the work of redemption, by believing this redemption from the heart and accepting it. For anything else is not conversion. Just as God has given himself the highest glory through redemption, so men should now also begin to give God the glory, and this happens through faith. For through faith, it says in Scripture, Abraham gave God the glory. No doctrine is therefore so worthy of diligent and thorough study, so worthy that the preacher should present it in a more attractive and lovely way, than the doctrine of the redemption of the world through Christ, in which the listeners are shown how God became the sinner of all sinners and took upon himself all shame, curse and wrath. Where this doctrine is not preached purely, God is shamefully reviled, and again, where this piece shines gloriously, God alone is given all the glory. The apostle says of the preachers: "We are therefore ambassadors for Christ." He does not call them mere teachers, but ambassadors who are to bring the joyful message of the gospel to the world. They are not simply to instruct the world, like the philosopher. No, the main thing, the real task is for the preacher to come as a

messenger of God and say: Oh, dear people, be happy, you are saved, don't you know it yet? Well, I come as a messenger of God to proclaim it to you: God is reconciled with you. But this is now being preached less and less in the churches. At best, the listeners are instructed, but usually they are only beaten up, given rules, punished harshly and given a great goal. So it is no wonder that people are reluctant to go to church. For even the righteous feel oppressed and, weighed down in their conscience, leave the house of God because they have once again realized that they are not as they should be. But the preachers themselves are to blame. They are too few messengers of God, forgetting that their main office is to show how much God has done for us poor sinners in infinite love, and that we should only believe it. And let no one doubt that this is the main thing, that we believe: we are redeemed! For before Christ ascended into heaven, he gave his disciples the main instruction, as it were the *summa summarum* of his whole religion: "Go into all the world and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. *All in all,* this is what a preacher has to preach. If he does not seek to make each of his listeners divinely certain of his salvation, he is not doing what he is called to do. Admittedly, if a preacher now presents himself as quite pious, punishes sins terribly, can pray quite unctuously and with tears, prays for half an hour so that people think he wants to pull heaven down with his prayer, and at the same time conceals, even rejects Christ's perfect redemption, most people say, "That's a preacher I'll put up with." But such a preacher is only a hindrance in the kingdom of God and we do not want to know anything about him. If, on the other hand, a preacher proclaims Christ Jesus, exalts this man, and makes people rejoice from the heart that they have such a glorious Savior, that is the right man, he is an ambassador in God's stead. We preachers should imagine ourselves as if we had been with the Lord Jesus on Calvary, had seen and heard everything as Christ exclaimed, "It is finished," and then the Savior called out to us from the cross, "Go, tell the world what you have seen and heard. If we look at ourselves in this way, we will enter the pulpit in a completely different way and proclaim with a fiery tongue: What blessed people you are! You are saved. Only do not do the one thing, that you reject it in unbelief!

No doubt this is also the reason why many preachers have so much trouble preaching. They have the wrong goal in mind. If they thought: I want to magnify Jesus and his Word and his love and mercy to my dear listeners, they would not

have enough space on the paper and enough thoughts would occur to them. That always remains the main thing. That must ultimately be the reason for everything we do and say, as Luther rightly says: Even when the Lord Jesus proclaims woe, he does so in order to be able to save. He paints the eternal torment of hell for us so that we do not enter it. Who will be surprised if I call out with a loud voice to a blind man who is walking towards an abyss? Stop, stop, where are you going? Go back, or you will die. Wouldn't it be foolishness if the blind man said: Why are you shouting at me like that? On the contrary, such a one would thank me for having called him with all the power of my voice. So the preacher also cries out loudly, as it were, when he is sharpening the law for his listeners. But he should only use it as a means to lead his listeners beyond the law to the gospel. Unfortunately, however, many sermons are now nothing more than miserable babble that is supposed to be Christian. It is easier to listen to a preacher of pure nature than to a washerman who talks in a jumble without having the right goal in mind. Sometimes he punishes, sometimes he comforts, sometimes he indulges in serious woe, sometimes in shouts of glory. But his first and last aim is not to present Jesus Christ, the core and star of the whole of Holy Scripture, to his listeners in a glorious and lovely way. The Holy Spirit can certainly bless such preaching if it still speaks of Christ and his work, but it is quite another matter whether a preacher merely babbles about the gospel like a child or whether one notices that he is filled with holy earnestness for the cause of the gospel. He is constantly heading for the goal: to save people. It is impossible for a church to die a spiritual death.

But, of course, it is not enough for the preacher to merely make up his mind to do this; above all, he must experience daily in his own heart what a sweet treasure the gospel is. Then it will be said with him, as it was with the apostles: I can't leave it alone, I must go out again today to praise the redemption through Jesus Christ. It is also a wonderful, fruitful means of preparation for this if the preacher diligently studies Luther.

The preacher should take care that he does not speak so coldly and dryly about this glorious act of God of redemption. He should not be content with merely presenting salvation in simple, dry words without any evidence. He should do so in the proper manner, like a lawyer. He is not satisfied with the fact that he has only simply presented his case; he uses all the reasons he can find and exerts all his strength to convince. So let the preacher also make every effort to convince his hearers of this glorious act of God in salvation. He should try to draw his listeners away from the devil's kingdom and over to God's side. It is also

the Holy Spirit who, as Luther translated it, punishes the world, i.e. convinces it of unbelief as the main sin, of the only valid righteousness and of the overthrow of the devil and the infernal kingdom. That this is the task of a preacher is also clearly indicated by Paul in his words to the Galatians: "to whom Christ Jesus was set before the eyes." The reason why Christ is painted before the eyes so little or not at all in the modern preaching books is undoubtedly that people seek their own honor. They do not want to be poor lost and damned sinners. Truly, if a preacher is a poor sinner, he thanks God eternally for his sweet gospel and praises it to his listeners without ceasing. But this is precisely what the devil tries to prevent preachers from doing. For he does not want sinners to come to true glory. Rather, he wants them to seek their own honor and thus go to eternal shame and damnation.

This can be seen so clearly in the terrible teaching of the Iowans, since they claim that everything depends on man's decision and not on God and his grace. Such terrible teaching gives glory to man and robs God of all His glory. God protect us from this! For our salvation depends solely and exclusively on Christ and his eternal mercy.

18 [1875 Western District essay by Walther] ^

# Proceedings of the Synod.

The Synod continued in the discussion of the theses dealing with the subject:

**“That only through the doctrine of the Lutheran Church alone is all honor given to God, an incontrovertible proof that the doctrine of the same is the only true one.”**

These are as follows:

Thesis I. [1873 Western]

Since religion is the way of worshipping God, only that religion is true which in all its teachings gives glory to God alone.

Isaiah 42:8, Romans 1:21, 25, John 7:18, 8:49, Luke 2:14, Romans 3:27, 4:20

19 [1875 Western District essay by Walther]

Thesis II. [1873 Western]

Since a visible church is an assembly of people who “profess one doctrine and religion”, the only true church is the one that gives glory to God alone through all its teachings.

Ps 26:8, Rev 14:6, 7, John 5:44.

Thesis III. [1873-1880 Western]

Only through the doctrine of the Lutheran Church is all glory given to God alone; this is evident, among other things, from its doctrine:

1. of the Word of God;
2. of the cause of sin, death, hell and damnation;
3. of divine providence;
4. of the general will of God's grace;
5. of the reconciliation and redemption of the human race;

**6. the justification of the sinner by grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ without merit of works;**

**7. the necessity of regeneration, sanctification and good works;**

**[A. Regeneration] — [B. Sanctification] — [C. Good Works]**

8. the foundation, validity, power and immutability of the means of grace;
9. of conversion;
10. of the invocation and worship of God;
11. of obedience to men in matters of faith and conscience;
12. the election of grace.

**[6. The Justification of the Sinner by Grace Alone Through Faith in Jesus Christ Without Merit of Works.]**

We moved on to the 6th point of the 3rd thesis (^), according to which the truth that all glory is given to God alone through the teaching of the Lutheran Church is proven by its doctrine “of the justification of the sinner by grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ without merit of works.”

God has created everything for his glory, says the Holy Scripture. This is not to say that God is a venerable being who needs creatures in order to be properly honored; rather, it is to say: God is such a kind and loving God that he did not want to have his glory alone; he wanted to draw other beings into his glory. But this can only happen if they recognize his glory and thus give him all the glory. As much as man truly recognizes God, so much is he blessed; as much of God remains hidden from him, so much is he miserable and full of sorrow; hence the Scripture says that hell will be eternal darkness, for the damned will not recognize God. All religion should bear witness to the glory of God, reveal him in his glory. Now that religion will be the true one which in all

its teachings gives glory to God alone, i.e. whose teachings are such that through each of them God's glory is revealed; and all religions are false which give glory to any being besides the dear God. Therefore, even if a religion and church calls itself Christian, indeed wants to be the only true one, if it has such doctrines through which God is deprived of glory and the creature is given glory, then it is a false religion and church. In truth, the Lutheran Church gives all glory to God alone in all its teachings. We have seen this so far in its doctrine of the Word of God, of the cause of sin, death, hell and damnation, of divine providence and of God's general will of grace; we also see this in its doctrine of justification.

Not every doctrine of justification gives God all the glory. There is no church party that does not have a doctrine of justification, for those who have nothing of it are pagans, Jews or Turks. The question is rather: what is the biblical doctrine of justification? The church that does not have this biblical doctrine deprives God of glory. Scripture itself expressly says in Romans 3:27, 4:20, Ephesians 2:8-9, that through its doctrine of justification all glory is taken away from men, but all glory is given to God. For when the latter passage says: by grace you have been saved, this is synonymous with: justified; the justified person does not yet fully enjoy salvation on earth, but the beginning of salvation is here. He carries something within him which death cannot eradicate, but which becomes perfect when the body has died. Whoever teaches justification in such a way that man can still boast of something, has only the appearance of truth, not the truth itself. By this the church must test its preacher, the preacher his brother in the ministry; for by this teaching the church is distinguished from the whole world. The Jews and pagans, even the atheists, are also aware that they must become righteous. For why do even the atheists give themselves the appearance of an honorable life? why do they not live before all the world like the dear cattle? Because they have the law in their hearts; life must be in accordance with the law of right and wrong. But no man knows by nature how we are to become righteous; this has never come into the heart of man, God alone has known it for all eternity and has revealed it to us through his prophets in the Old Testament and even more gloriously, more abundantly, more clearly and more fully in the New Testament through his holy apostles.

So what is the doctrine of justification?

Five points in particular are to be considered here:

1. No man is just by nature, but unjust, and therefore accursed and damned and condemned to hell, even when he comes into the world; for the doctrine of justification does not say that

man is just, but that he is to become just. So this is evident: he is conceived and born in sin. Whoever does not teach this, in relation to the doctrine of justification, robs God of the glory and gives it to men.

2. God alone has made provision for man's justification by sending his only begotten Son into the world according to his unfathomable mercy, laying on him the sins of the whole world and punishing them in him. Thus there is no sin that has not been atoned for, no matter how great it may be, whether it has already been committed or is yet to be committed: Christ has borne them all, has felt them all, has been punished for them all. But he also kept the law perfectly, even though he was not obliged to do so. He did not live a pious life because it is part of human life to be pious, for he was far above the law as its giver and master; but for us he fulfilled the law perfectly. So the righteousness that is before God has been acquired for us, it is finished, it is there. He who does not believe this, who does not teach it, robs God of his glory; he who thinks he must add a little something to his righteousness, gives himself the credit, says: God has not justified the world through Christ; he therefore tramples Christ's blood underfoot, rejects the atonement of God, desecrates the death of Christ, rejects Christ's resurrection and ascension, in a word: rejects the whole redemptive work of Christ.

3. Where do I find the righteousness of Christ? where is it?

The good Lord did not say: it is acquired, now see to it yourself to get it; nor did he say: pray, struggle, wrestle until you realize that you have it. How could I ever be sure that I have it through my imperfect prayers and struggles? And if you think you have obtained it in this way, it is only a dream from which you will wake up in horror. No, we must be absolutely certain that we have grace; even the greatest sinner, who is already on the gallows ladder, must be able to be certain that he too is to be justified before God. So where do we find God's grace? Answer: In the Word of God and in the holy sacraments, nowhere else. He has put it there. Whoever does not take it out of these, his justification is only imagination, only foam and appearance, and even if he wept bloody tears over his sins and laughed in his feeling of bliss, like the angels in heaven — he does not have righteousness, he only imagines it. Such enthusiasts also show this clearly in temptation or in the time of death; for in the end they must take refuge in the Word of God, in the promises of Baptism and Holy Communion, and he who does so dies blessedly; for God is always ready to give his grace to the poor sinner, he has condemned none; but he will not allow it to be

stolen from him, nor attained in any other way, no matter how steep a climb it may involve. He does not want to stand beside false spirits, but wants us to receive his grace in the way he has ordained, namely from the Word and Sacrament; he has bound it to these means. In order to show us this correctly, God also prescribed the cultus in the Old Testament down to the smallest detail, e.g. how the roses on the pillars of the temple should be arranged or how the priestly garments should be cut. He did not do this as a joke, it was not a gimmick, for God does not play jokes or gimmicks; rather he wanted to say: keep exactly to my instructions, otherwise you will be lost, seek my grace in my word, that is the shrine where I have placed the jewel. — This brings us to the fourth question concerning justification:

4. How do I get this?

Everyone will easily realize that the three points just mentioned give God all the glory — and men all the shame. Finally, should something still be demanded of man, that he is perhaps the main person who causes him to go to heaven? However, this is what the sects think. They say that man must do the main thing if he wants to be saved; if he struggles, strives, fights and prays enough, he can also attain salvation. In this way, however, God is again deprived of all honor and a pagan justification is erected with a few Christian rags around it. No, by faith, by faith alone, and by no works whatsoever, I attain righteousness, I receive it from Word and Sacrament. But what is faith? Holy Scripture has told us: faith is the confidence of the heart that appropriates the promise of grace that lies in the audible (Word of God) and visible (Sacrament) Gospel. Whoever does this has it, whoever does not, does not. The East Indians, in order to be saved, torture themselves to death with the most cruel tortures, have themselves hanged alive on iron hooks, crushed by the chariot of the juggernaut; but where do they go with it? to the devil whom they have served. It is the same in Christianity: a man may fast to death to obtain God's grace, but he is the devil's martyr. No, he who is thirsty should go to the fountain to drink, namely to the Word and Sacrament. But faith is often taught falsely, and thus all honor is taken from God. In his treatise on indulgences, Luther fights primarily against the definition of justification by the medieval scholastics, who teach that justifying faith is a quality in the heart that includes love. Whoever has this and proves it in good works will be saved. But God will tear this false, self-made righteousness from the bodies of those work-saints like cobwebs and say to them, since all that man does is wretched: For my glory have I created you,

for my shame have you lived; and God will trample underfoot him who has rejected the righteousness which the Scriptures offer, but brings his wretched works before God. God's gifts of grace are not a piece of merchandise that we could buy from God for our rusty money; the church of Christ is not a junk shop; if God accepts something from us in grace, which we give him out of gratitude for the grace we have received, God must first give it to us, and then it is still mercy that he allows himself to be pleased with it. This is Lutheran teaching; anyone who does not have this is not Lutheran.

But if you say: yes, I don't want to be Lutheran at all, then know that you are not Christian either, for Lutheranism is nothing other than Christianity. If you torture yourself until you lie half-dead on the ground, if you do not grasp in faith the righteousness of Christ, which he acquired for you when He, the true God, lay for you in his blood, wrestling with death, on the ground in Gethsemane, then nothing can comfort you, nothing can save you from the jaws of death, nothing can tear you out of the furnace of hell. This: “Therefore we hold that a man is justified without the works of the law, through faith **alone**” [Rom. 3:28] is true Christianity, but it is also true Lutheranism. Luther had already heard the words of Scripture in Germany: “The just shall live by faith”, but had not understood them. Then, as he slid up Pilate's Stairs in Rome to beg an indulgence from the Pope, it rang in his heart with a voice of thunder: the just shall live by his faith, the just shall live by his faith, — and as if shattered by this voice, he staggered half-dead back down the stairs, slinking away like a criminal. God's voice in that saying told him: "To the devil's indulgence you flee, and Christ's indulgence you despise; the Lord has done such hard work to redeem men, and you wretched man do not accept it! — and so the scriptural teaching drove Luther to the great work of Church Reformation.

Man should do nothing, nothing at all, to become righteous before God; he should only believe, i.e. acquire the righteousness that is valid before God through faith; that is the right doctrine. Remember, God did not create man as *a tabula rasa* (i.e. as a clean slate) and then watch and wait to see what would become of man; man was not neutral after creation, but perfect. God himself said: everything was very good. He had created him with righteousness, a holy will, clear knowledge, an enlightened mind, pure love of God and neighbor; man was not to become righteous first, but God had already made him righteous when he created him. What will God do now that man has so horribly squandered this great good and is lying in the dunghill, dirty, torn and ragged in his blood? Will he call out to him? Now

arise, thou dead, thou sick, thou sinner, thou reprobate, and become a better man? No, certainly not. God creates everything, so he also restores to man the righteousness which He had created for him in Adam, but which he lost in Adam, and people should rely on this grace in faith.

No one should think that even the ungodly can believe. Only he who is so crushed by the preaching of the law that he despairs of himself, only he comes with difficulty and seeks the consolation of the gospel; and this then calls out to him: Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you and your household will be saved; but he also testifies to his faith by a holy walk.

Now since God justifies us, and we obtain righteousness through faith, it is evident that man can do nothing and does nothing to obtain faith, but only God works and gives it. Only this terrible power is available to man to reject faith, not to accept it, to resist grace. As Stephen said to the high council, you always resist the Holy Spirit, just as your fathers did, so you also; and as Christ proclaims about Jerusalem, how often have I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you did not want to. So no one may say: Yes, I have often wanted to convert, but have not been able to, because I am dead in sins; God answers him: Have I not wanted to convert you? Has not my Word often reached your heart in a holy place, and you have gone out of the church into the next drinking saloon, drank away the grace I offered you, scratched out again what I had written in your heart? Just as Lazarus was raised from the dead by Christ's almighty word, so it is with us in the spiritual realm. We are all spiritually dead by nature; when the life-giving Word of God comes to us, we wake up, but most do not want to get up and therefore die again until they go to eternal death.

So it is to God alone that we owe all our salvation, for we owe all righteousness to him; and this is one and the same, for where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation. So God has all glory, but man only all guilt and shame. This is Lutheran doctrine. The Lutheran Church says: "Just as God gives us bodily life without all our cooperation, so also spiritual life. Just as God created righteousness for us in paradise, he also gives it to us again without any action on our part. It is true that Christians must also struggle, pray and fight, but not in order to obtain grace, but in order not to lose it again. Those who think that the Lutheran doctrine that faith is given by God alone without any effort on our part makes people safe are very much mistaken; On the contrary, precisely because it is such a great gift of God,

true Christians and Lutherans pray, struggle and wrestle most earnestly and fearfully, lest their corrupt flesh and blood, their evil heart, their old Adam, under whom they are sold unto death, the wicked world and the wretched devil, these enemies of their salvation, should rob them of it. Therefore, the following applies: Work out your salvation with fear and trembling. He, on the other hand, fights against grace, indeed, he blasphemes it, who thinks he has to ask for it and fight for it, for he says: "I do not really trust God to give me grace; I would rather take the certain instead of the uncertain, I want to work it out for myself.

From all this we can see how important this doctrine of justification is. Life and salvation depend on it; therefore it must not be taught in passing, but must be placed at the center of all teaching and preaching; anyone who does not do this is not a Lutheran teacher. All other church bodies teach it at most now and then, because they do not really trust it. Yes, the Jesuits, those wicked scoundrels, only reveal it to the people at the hour of death; why? they first want to cheat the people out of their money in life by their shameful doctrine of works. Then, in death's bed, when they have nothing more to hope from them, they reveal the secret to them. Our Church, however, in the Augsburg Confession, in the Small Catechism, etc., takes this doctrine very seriously. It is its Alpha and Omega, the heart in the body, the soul that governs and moves everything in the Lutheran church body and gives it all life, the kernel in the shell. For what good would it do us if we knew that God is triune, that Christ is God and man in one person, that our flesh will one day be resurrected, and had all the other glorious doctrines of faith, but did not have the doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith alone, without merit of works? This is the sun, the other doctrines are the rays that go out from it and return to it; they are all there for the sake of justification; they open up the understanding of justification for us. For example, we must know that God is triune in order to recognize it: It is God who gives us grace, it is Christ who obtains it for us, it is the Holy Spirit who appropriates it to us through faith. For faith is nothing other than the acceptance of the gift of God's grace, as is especially evident from Romans 4:16. Everyone should remember this precious passage!

Our church confessions also testify that the Lutheran church also proves itself to be the true church of God through the doctrine of justification, because it also gives all glory to God alone through this doctrine.

This is shown, among others, by the Jena theologian [Johann Christoph] Köcher when he writes: "Whatever the Lutheran religion teaches, be it doctrines of heavenly truth or moral precepts, all of this is without

exception to the divine glory. To God alone it gives this praise, that He has prepared and provided the means by which mortal men can be saved from their so great misery. In expounding this at length, she praises God's dignity with the greatest diligence and extols His mercy, justice and power to the utmost." (*De veritate et praestantia, relig. ev.-luth. ex Aug. Conf. ducent. Jenae, 1731. p. 59 sq.*)

The works saints would of course like to see themselves and their works honored in heaven and boast: oh what we have done and suffered, how hard we have made it for ourselves to earn our salvation, but now we are also here in heaven; and would like to say with a regretful sideways glance at the others: if they had also been so pious, they could also be fine here. But that is accursed talk. Just read the songs of the blessed in heaven, as described in the Revelation of John. Do they perhaps praise something in themselves? No, they know nothing of their wretched works, but to God they bring praise, honor, glory and worship from eternity to eternity. Not as if they had no good works; the Christian does indeed do many good works, but not in order to earn salvation, but out of gratitude for the grace received from God. The justified person says: "If I, a shameful sinner, have obtained grace, who before lay there like a worm trampled underfoot in my shame and unworthiness, what should I now do out of gratitude for it? and now the good works begin, now he loves God, now he helps his neighbor, now he reconciles himself with his enemy, and so on.

Köcher continues: "For the honor of Christ's death and satisfaction, which alone can save men, it fights valiantly, rejecting the means of salvation which men are wont to devise and apply, rejecting the merits of the saints, and teaching that trust in them is a false one. Hence the 2nd article of the Augsburg Confession states: 'Hereby are rejected the Pelagians and others, who ... make nature pious by natural powers to the dishonor of the sufferings and merits of Christ.'" *(l.c.*; AC 2, 3)

This is the most powerful proof. Through works-righteousness the suffering of Christ is dishonored. Where the Lord redeems us by the sweat of His blood, where He Himself says through the mouth of the prophet: “I tread the winepress alone, and there is none among the nations with Me” (Ezek. 63:3), there they want to help, there they rob Christ of the honor of redemption and take it for themselves. Thus Antichrist robs the glory of the Lord and attributes it, among other things, to Mary, i.e. the Mary of his own imagination; for the Mary of pabstdom is not the true Mary, but an idol.

Köcher continues: "Furthermore, in the 27th article: 'Now it is the day

that the monks have taught and preached that the imaginary clergy do enough for sin, and obtain God's grace and righteousness. What is this but diminishing the glory and the price of grace? "Even those who want to be justified by vows are alienated from Christ and lack the grace of God, for they rob Christ of his glory, who alone justifies, and give such glory to their vows and monastic life. *) [*) The honor of Christ is thus the supreme principle and touchstone of all doctrine in the Augsburg Confession.] In the last article it says: 'Now this is publicly contrary to God's command and word, to make or command laws of opinion, that thereby one may do enough for sin and obtain grace: for the honor of Christ's merit is blasphemed, if by such statutes we forbear to merit grace'." *(l. c.*; [*Triglotta* p. 81, 89])

If the grace and mercy of God is diminished, this is blasphemous and terrible. But this is what is happening in our time from the various false church parties. In general, temptation now appears everywhere in its most subtle form, often under a very pious appearance, but especially that which wants to put JEsum aside with fine speeches and to shred man into a fine place.

Furthermore, the Apology says: "We condemn such public error and false doctrine of works. First, that thereby the honor is taken away from Christ, the true Mediator, and is given to wretched works, if we want to present our works in Christ's stead as a treasure and propitiation for divine wrath and sin. For the glory belongs to Christ alone, not to our wretched works." (Ap 4, 204)

What comfort there is in these words! The devil, reason, or other such friends say: Do this, do that, if you want to be saved. But do not listen to those voices! In this God wants to be honored, that he gives us, who deserve hell a thousand times over, both wine and milk freely and without money, that he takes care of the poor sinner out of free grace, so that he may come and drink to the full. Therefore, let no one be deterred from coming! Let him take it precisely when he feels nothing of salvation or even pure darkness within himself. Let the devil and hell rage around him and condemn him, the debtor, but let him grasp it with confidence; here is capital enough for his bankruptcy, which Christ has earned for us through his hard work, and that will be Christ's reward enough for us to accept his merit, and whoever believes it has it; may all devils then condemn him: God himself calls out to him: "You are not lost after all.

"You are my dear child after all,
In spite of the devil, the world and all sounds."

But of course, we must also speak:

In me and my life
There is nothing on this earth;
What Christ has given me,
That is worthy of love.

Article IV. § 256 of the Apology states: "But if there is to be and remain a Christian church, the pure doctrine of Christ, of the righteousness of faith, must be preserved. Therefore we must challenge such great Pharisaical errors, so that we may save the name of Christ and the honor of the Gospel and of Christ." — and previously § 33: “The woman comes to Christ in the confidence that she will obtain forgiveness of sin from him, that is, to recognize and honour Christ properly.” — and § 35: “For if we trust in our works, Christ's honor is taken away, and Christ is not the propitiation and mediator.”

The Apology goes on to say: “Thus he wants to be honored, that we should take and receive grace, salvation, all good things from him, namely by grace, not for the sake of our merit.” (Art. 4. fol. 35b.)

Thus the Augsburg Confession excludes all personal merit. What, on the other hand, does the pope do? He curses those who hold to Christ's merit alone, and demands that each one do enough himself for the sins he has committed after Baptism. Thus the Council ofTrent says: “If anyone says that justifying faith is nothing other than a trust in divine mercy which remits sins for Christ's sake, or that this trust alone is what justifies us, let him be accursed.” Thus the Pope curses Christ's merit, God's grace, the Gospel, in a word: Christ.

In the Formula of Concord (Part 1, Art. III, § 10) it says: "We believe, teach and confess that for the preservation of the pure doctrine of the righteousness of faith for God, the *particulis exclusivis*, that is, the following words of the holy apostle Paul, whereby the merit of Christ is completely separated from our works and the glory is given to Christ alone, is to be kept with special diligence, as the holy apostle Paul writes: By grace, without merit, without law, without works, not of works, which words are all at the same time so much as by faith alone in Christ alone we are justified and saved."

It is also extremely important to keep this doctrine pure and clear for the sake of those who are under attack, for the person under attack doubts whether he has grace with God and considers himself unworthy of it because of his sins. This is due to the blindness of reason, which also thinks that

something must happen in a person in order to make him worthy of grace**.** Thus Osiander taught that the Lutheran doctrine of justification, according to which God declares the sinner righteous for the sake of Christ, is contrary to the truthfulness and righteousness of God, for since according to it God only rewards good with good, man must also have something good to show. We are also blasphemed because of our polemics against all those who falsify the doctrine of justification; we are called syllabists, people who only wage wars over words: but we will gladly take this upon ourselves, we want to preserve the high jewel of justification for our dear children through our polemics and also offer it to those who are tempted; the latter, however, find strong consolation precisely in the fact that “by grace alone” serves the glory of God, therefore all poor sinners should be justified for the sake of God's glory. It is also important that Luther always shows how those who want to enter heaven by works do not go the way of the Spirit, but the way of the flesh, and therefore fear true justification as they do death and hell. It is not merely above reason, but against it. Thus Luther also shows how all false doctrine of justification is contrary to the first commandment and sets God aside; especially how it abolishes the three fundamental attributes of God, his love, justice and truth. For no man can acquire righteousness, even if God demanded but little, he could not afford it; so if God had not bestowed his love on men, they would still be lost, whereas the Christian religion is purely a religion of thanksgiving for God's love, and the temple itself is called the place of thanksgiving by the Holy Spirit. But it also argues against God's justice, because then God would demand that the guilt of sin be paid twice, once by Christ, the other time by us. But it also argues against God's truth; for since the resurrection of Christ is the Father's declaration before the whole world and to the whole world that it is now righteous before Him, so that it may believe that it is redeemed and reconciled, since Christ sends his disciples into all the world to preach the gospel to every creature, all false teaching makes God and Christ a liar by denying that the world is truly redeemed. The wretched people! And if one man slipped on his knees over the whole world, he could not earn the grace that Christ, lying on his knees in the Garden of Gethsemane and hanging on the cross at Golgotha, has earned for us. Thus the false doctrine of justification brings people back under the bitter wrath of God and into hell, and whoever wants to be justified by works confesses Christ with his mouth, but his heart knows nothing of him, and when sin awakens in him, he has no consolation.

While mere head-faith, or mouth-faith, leads to hell, a poor sinner who grasps God's grace through true faith

is transformed and renewed in his heart by such faith that he now walks around with a completely new courage, heart and mind, laughing at the whole world, and is richer in Christ's blood than if he possessed heaven and earth. But such a one does not allow his sins to rob him of this treasure; rather, he now also calls upon God in all earnestness for strength for sanctification. Those are greatly mistaken who think that we are opposed to earnest godliness, that we reject struggling, praying and wrestling, sighing and weeping; oh no! some of us are perhaps more on our knees than those who want to earn grace with it; we are only opposed to the fact that we must ask for grace, sigh for it, earn it.

Luther writes: "This doctrine or sermon (of Christ and faith) takes from us all the glory of holiness and says: there is nothing good in us of which we can boast; and again it teaches the conscience how it should behave towards God, shows it God's grace and mercy and the whole Christ. This is called God rightly revealed and praised, which is also the right sacrifice and worship.... No false Christian, nor the spirit of the riot, can understand this doctrine. How much less will he preach and confess it rightly! Even if he takes the words and repeats them, but still does not stick to them, nor does he leave them pure; he always preaches in such a way that one grasps that he is not right; yet he smears his zeal on it, thereby taking away Christ's honor and assigning it to himself. Therefore, this alone is the most certain work of a true Christian, when he praises and preaches Christ in such a way that people learn how they are nothing and Christ is everything." (Walch. VII, 622. f.; [St. L. 7, 418-419; AE 21 65 f.])

This is a beautiful passage against the enthusiasts of our time. Woe to those who boast of the great earnestness they use to get to heaven; the harlots and tax collectors will get there sooner than they will. Their earnestness is not so great. It is wonderful that Paul says in Galatians 6:12 that those who set their works beside faith are afraid to be persecuted with the cross of Christ, but this is so. The pagans wanted to laugh themselves to death at this. It was too great for them that the apostles taught that through faith in Jesus who hung on the cross, all sinners would be justified. “This is the right worship,” says Luther, "that faith should be preached; for where works are set up, the cult of man is set up; and where the first commandment is established, the grace of God is established. This is what we are to preach, “as we are nothing and Christ is everything”; the better a man knows how to preach this, the better he preaches; while he who does not understand this gives a loud froth, even if the listeners sponge in tears over his sermon.

**31** [1875 Western District essay by Walther]

Furthermore, Luther writes: "The faithless works-saints make it very sour for them with much and various repentance, fasting, prayer, cross and suffering; but because they think they want to appease God's wrath and earn mercy, they do not give God his honor, that is, they do not think that he is merciful, true and sufficient for his promise or promise: but consider him an angry judge, whom one must reconcile and appease with works. And just thereby they despise God, punish him with lies in all his promises, deny Christ together with all his good deeds: in sum, they cast God from his throne of majesty and put themselves in his place." (Walch. VIII., 2045; St. L. 9, 303-304; AE 26, 229)

As early as 1518, Luther wrote in the interpretation of his 95 propositions: “In this way the true glory of God springs from this Gospel, when it is taught that the law has been and will be fulfilled, not by our works, but by the grace of God, who has mercy on us in Christ; not by works, but by faith; not by offering something to God, but by receiving and partaking of everything from Christ, from whose fullness we all received and partake of.” (Walch. XVIII, 505; St. L. 18, 250; AE 31, 231)

Here reference was made to the example of Myconius, who, although in great need of forgiveness of sins, did not want to have an indulgence from Tetzel if he was not to have it in vain, because otherwise he would not have been assured of the forgiveness of his sins. *)

*) Read this delicious and edifying story in Mykonius' own words, told in No. 2 of the 28th volume of *Der Lutheraner*. Editor's note]

But modern theology, too, teaches again the doctrine of works, and indeed the most refined, in that it presents faith as a work by which we acquire grace. The clever Jesuits do likewise; they also pretend to teach that faith justifies, but they say that faith must be active in love. According to them, therefore, faith and love justify. Love is in faith like the powder in a gun, which [gun] only fulfills to its purpose through the powder; or the jewel in a box, which only becomes precious through the jewel.

Thus Luther also writes on Gal. 2:4-5: "It is only a vain, useless rubbish what the foolish sophists have taught about *fide formata*, that is, about faith, which is to receive its right kind and form from love. For it is faith alone that justifies, which is grasped by the word of Christ and adorned and decorated with it, and not that faith that has love in it. For if faith is to be certain and steadfast, it must grasp nothing else, nor hold to anything else but the

one Christ**.** For in the distress of conscience it can stand on no other ground than this noble pearl alone." (Walch. VIII, 1729; St. L. 9, 129; AE 26, 88 f.)

This also lies in the nature of faith; for it belongs to the nature of faith that it trusts in a promise; but this we have only in the word, not in our works, for our works promise us nothing; so that this papal faith is superstition, so also the faith of all enthusiasts is thereby thrown overboard.

Finally, with regard to the doctrine of justification, the following must be considered: 5. that God does not justify us on one condition.

*) From here begins the protocol of Pastor Achilles.

*) It is common to say that God justifies man, but on the condition of faith. Man must also do something for justification, namely believe. Justification is therefore not to be ascribed entirely to God. But this means nothing other than taking away part of God's glory and attributing it to man. Thus it would not be God alone who saved us, but we with Him. Only those who do not know how to distinguish clearly between condition and means can come up with such ideas. A condition implies an achievement on the part of the one who is to receive something. For example: I give you the horse on the condition that you give me this much for it. By fulfilling the condition, the other person promises to fulfill his counter-performance. It would be the same with faith if it were made a condition of happiness. Faith would then be an achievement on our part, for which God would give us salvation in return. But this is wrong. We are not reconciled with God when we believe, but we are already redeemed, already reconciled with God, so that we believe. It is the same with justification. The whole world is already justified in Christ, but faith is not the condition by which we are justified, but the way in which we become partakers of the righteousness that God has long since given us. As it says in Scripture: God gave his Son to the world. He did not merely give the world permission to appropriate his Son, but, as it says in John 3:16, he gave him to us for this reason, that we should believe in him, and not only when we believe. This is rather like a beggar. Would such a person not be astonished if someone said to him: I will give you something, but only on condition that you stretch out your hand and take it? After all, he wants nothing more than to be given alms. It goes without saying that he takes it with his hand. This is the mere

way in which he receives it. The doctrine of justification can only be correctly understood if faith is presented merely as the hand, as the instrument, by which we appropriate the offered righteousness. The ancients speak of two means of attaining righteousness: the means of giving, namely Word and Sacrament, and the means of receiving, namely faith. If there is a means of giving, the gift itself must first be there. It is the same with righteousness. It is already there. The only question is how God wants to give it. The answer is: he gives it through his Word and Sacrament in his holy Christian Church. It is God's treasure house, the rich and beautiful storehouse in which he distributes his gifts. The preachers and originally all believers have the key to it, that is, the preaching and the administration of the holy sacraments, through which these gifts are imparted to us.

Faith is not a condition under which God first gives us, but he has already given it. For when God raised his Son from the dead, he did not forgive his own sin, but that of all mankind, which he had taken upon himself; he did not justify Christ from his own guilt, but from our guilt, which he had allowed to be imputed to him. Thus the whole world has already been justified by the resurrection of Christ, which man must now appropriate for himself through faith. Therefore, when Holy Scripture says that we are justified by faith, it is basically saying nothing other than that we are justified by grace, not that faith brings this about as a meritorious work, as the apostle Romans 4:16 writes.

A passage from [Jacob] Heerbrand was quoted in this connection. (Heerbrand wrote a book which almost brought about a union with the Greek church). Heerbrand writes: "The promises of the law are conditional, for they have the added condition that the law be kept and fulfilled perfectly. (Deut. 18:5. Matt. 19:17.) But the evangelical promises are promises of grace, which are free from all conditions." Note carefully the great difference in contrast. The gospel promises without any condition, whereas the great condition of the law is: keep it!

Heerbrand continues: “For they promise eternal life to all who believe in Christ.”

Papists, Arminians and other sects now come and say: there you see what a beautiful doctrine the Lutherans have. They say: salvation is given without condition. According to this, the wicked, thieves, liars, etc. are all saved. Just as the Universalists teach that no man is lost, but that all are saved, even the devil. According to them, this is the true doctrine of grace. But this is nothing but pure

fraud. The enthusiasts know very well that we do not teach this. Rather, such a doctrine is a true doctrine of shame, whereby God is made into a devil. According to this, God gave the law, but it has nothing to do with anything. If it threatens all transgressors of God with eternal wrath, it is not meant to be so bad. Sin does not need to be atoned for, it does not need to be blotted out, it can be done without it. On the other hand, Holy Scripture expressly says that in order to save us, God himself had to become a man and keep the whole law, that he had to atone for our sins in such a way that no human thought can fully comprehend it. For every sin he suffered severely. Again, man must now accept what Christ has acquired, otherwise he does not have it, and otherwise God cannot save him either. This does not mean, however, that God can do many things, but that this is too great for him, but that God is holy and cannot cease to be holy. It is impossible for man to cast God from his throne through his sin. He will remain seated. The whole human race must go to hell before God is deprived of his holy and righteous majesty.

Heerbrand continues: "One interjects: Faith is also demanded as a condition, according to that word: 'He that believeth shall be saved. Furthermore: 'If one believes from the heart' (Rom. 10:10)." It was noted that in the Bible the expression “if we believe, we will be saved” is never used in the sense that it indicates a condition. Nor does it say: because of faith, but through faith, by grace. A teacher must be very careful here that he does not use incorrect words in the exposition of this doctrine, whereby the clarity of it is impaired. What a sweet and comforting teaching it is that we do not have to earn righteousness first, but that God gives it to us! Just as God himself once made clothes for men from sheepskins and gave them to them, so God has also prepared the garment of righteousness for us and gives it to us. But this garment is nothing other than the suffering and death of Jesus Christ; this is our righteousness.

So what does Heerbrand answer to our question? Answer: Faith is not a condition, nor is it required as a condition; because justification is not promised or offered on account of the worthiness or merit of it, or in so far as it is a work.

It has been remarked that if faith were a condition on which God justifies us, there must be some worthiness or merit in faith, or it must be such a work as God would regard. But this is a real confusion of different concepts. Does a hand have merit because it grasps a gift? Would it not be madness to say such a thing? Faith, too, is nothing other than the uplifted hand which man stretches out

to take what God presents, gives and seals to him without condition.

Heerbrand continues: "It is only the way of accepting the benefits offered and given through and for the sake of Christ; and thus the instrument or, as it were, the hand that grasps and appropriates Christ and his benefits offered in the gospel. Just as when a beggar is given alms, which he takes with his hand, the hand is not called the condition, but the means and instrument by which the alms is accepted." *(Compend. Theologiae. 1582. p. 379. sq*.)

Note well: it is only a way of accepting it. The question why faith is this way is easily answered. Because there is no other way in which it could happen. It cannot be love, because I cannot grasp a promise through it. God gives us everything through the promises in His Word. But how can we grasp them other than through faith? For example, if someone promises something, I must believe that he will keep it. Therefore, only faith can be the means by which we receive what God gives us through His promises. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are likewise nothing other than promises, except that an outward sign is added to them; they are the visible Word. Since God gives everything by promise, there is no other way than to accept everything by faith. There is no other way. Faith is therefore the instrument, or as it were the hand, with which we grasp what God offers us in his promises. If we want to make it clear to people how faith relates to justification, these two expressions are best suited to achieve this. It is very necessary to be clear on this point; only then will we teach correctly about justification. As much as all Christian bodies talk about faith, few have a proper conception of faith and how it justifies. They think of faith as a special quality in man. Man is now no longer as before, but transformed, that there is now something good in him, which is why God now regards him as righteous. But faith is only a taking; that it transforms is only a fruit of it. If he receives, the fruits follow: a different will, a different mind, indeed man is now a new creature.

The accusation that we Lutheran preachers proclaim the forgiveness of sins to all, regardless of whether they are repentant or not, is unfounded. We preachers are not preachers of the heart. Forgiveness of sins is also acquired for the impenitent. It is only their unbelief that prevents justification from being put into effect for them.

So it is not that God accepts faith in us, or

that he has chosen us because we believe, since he has chosen us only through his grace**.** Thus our Lutheran Church proves to be the true one in this respect as well, insofar as it teaches that it is God alone who justifies us. Justification is not something that happens in our hearts, but in God. Sanctification takes place in us. Justification is a judicial act of God, in which he acquits the sinner of guilt and punishment and declares him righteous. The question as to whether these expressions, “we are justified or saved on the condition of faith”, had no justification at all, was answered as follows: if one speaks of the necessity of faith, then one can certainly use this expression, but not without first having removed all misunderstanding. If it is said in Romans 10:10: “If one believes from the heart, he is justified”, this is indeed a conditional form of speech; but since faith itself is a gift of God, which he gives to man, it also fulfills this condition itself, and only the willful resistance, by which the faith offered is rejected, prevents man from his salvation. Otherwise it is true that if a person does not believe, he cannot be saved.

The following passage from Gerhard was quoted in this regard: "The little word ‘if’ is either etiological or syllogistic. That is, it denotes either the cause or the consequence. In the preaching of the law: ‘If you do this, you will live’, the little word ‘if’ is etiological, because obedience is the cause for which eternal life is given to those who keep the law; but in the evangelical promises: ‘If you believe, you will be saved’, the little word ‘if’ is syllogistic, because it designates the manner of appropriation established by God, which belongs to faith alone." *(Loc. de evangelio § 26.*)

So when the little word “if” is used in Scripture, it is not always necessarily a conditional “if”, but often a syllogistic “if”, which serves to indicate the consequence. If faith were the condition of salvation, then man would also do something towards it if he fulfilled this condition. Just as if I sold a house worth a thousand dollars to someone for a hundred dollars, I would not have actually given it to him, since he had given a sum for it, however small. God asks nothing of us, we are only supposed to take. And since God Himself works faith, it cannot be a cause or condition, but only a means of justification.

[J. B.] Carpzov in his interpretation of the symbolic books therefore says: “It is inaccurate to call faith the instrumental cause of justification.”..... *(Isagoge in libros Symbol, p. 206*.) Otherwise it would not be God alone who justifies us, but our

faith would also produce it. God would then not yet be fully reconciled with us, but we would first have to reconcile him. Christ's merit would not have been sufficient to earn us the righteousness that is valid before God. Indeed, the whole work of redemption would be called into doubt. But, thank God, our justification has already been accomplished. Christ has left us nothing more to do, he has already done everything; we have only to rejoice in it, to appropriate it to ourselves in order to be saved.

Carpzov says in another passage: “Faith contributes to justification in no other way than that it is the instrument by which the justifying cause is received by us.” (Ibid. p. 1298.)

The actual cause of our justification is Christ. Faith is not itself a work, but only an instrument. We have nothing to accomplish, because we cannot accomplish anything, not even faith. If our justification depended on the perfection of our faith, we would all be lost. When it says in Scripture: “I look upon the wretched and brokenhearted, who fears my word” (Isaiah 66:2), it means nothing other than: I look upon a poor sinner who clings to my grace. Why does God look at him? For the sake of Christ, not for the sake of his faith. Faith in itself is an empty hand. But just as a wooden box containing a precious stone becomes a precious box, so faith is only precious because it holds Jesus in its hands. The hand itself remains as before. When one says that faith justifies, this is nothing but a metonymy, whereby one communicates to that which contains something the properties of that which it contains. We say: drink a cup of coffee. One does not drink the cup itself, but only the coffee; but one says: That was a nice cup. However, we do not mean the cup, but the coffee it contains.

Faith justifies only because it has taken hold of Christ, who justifies the sinner, not as a work, or as something good, or because it is active, but because faith undergoes something, because God gives it something. If faith were a virtue, there would have been enough deficiency in Paul's faith to bring him to hell. What is true of unbelief is not true of faith. Unbelief is the cause of damnation, but faith is not the cause of salvation.

This doctrine is also important because if one makes faith the condition of salvation, one thereby ascribes to man the ability to work faith. This is the error of the Methodists and other sects, that they think that God gives grace and that it is up to man to accept it, that it is therefore not God who gives faith. But the glory of God and the salvation of man are

most closely connected. As soon as one ascribes the least in the work of salvation to man, one takes it away from God.

How can one comfort someone who is tempted? After all, he thinks he cannot believe. Such a person would have to despair at this teaching, while one must try to convince him that the Savior is already there for him, has already forgiven him, and wants to accept him. As soon as faith is made a condition of justification in the slightest, all the comfort of the gospel is taken away from such a person.

It can also be seen from this that our doctrine is the true one, because we give God the glory and teach that He alone works faith. Modern Lutheran theologians teach the opposite, just as the Iowans do, namely that God does indeed give the power to believe, but that it is up to man to decide that he must produce faith in himself instead of accepting it.

Thus writes Kahnis: "Children are capable of being born again. But they cannot have the fruit of rebirth, faith. Faith is an action of our ego. ... In rebirth, the Holy Spirit brings about the power to believe, not the act of faith." (*Die Lehre vom heiligen Abendmahl*. 1851. p. 431.) Is not this terribly spoken by those who are regarded as pillars of the Lutheran Church? According to this, the power would be there for the cause, but not the cause itself. Is that not inconsistent? As if someone wanted to say: the power to eat is there, but I cannot eat. Then we would first have the power to believe, and then we would be converted, whereas according to Scripture only a converted person believes.

Adam Osiander says: “Not only the power to believe is from God, but also the actual faith itself, because before the last effect of prevenient grace man is not yet converted; but the last effect of prevenient grace is the gift of faith.” *(Collegium. V, 116*.)

This is like a fortress that a king wants to conquer. First he surrounds it, then he fires at it and tries to get closer and closer by digging trenches. But much happens before he can take it. One bullet after another has to be fired into it first. Soon there is a fire here, soon there. But the fortress still refuses to surrender. Many a day has passed in this way; many an assault has been made in vain; at last a final blow is struck against it, forcing it to surrender. Whereupon the king makes his entry into the conquered city with the sound of music. So it is with a man. God takes hold of him in many ways, strikes blow after blow against him, but this is not yet something that happens inside the fortress, but everything happens from the outside. Jesus stands at the door and knocks. Soon he uses the law, soon the gospel. When the time finally comes, when he has broken down this fortress of the devil,

then he enters as the victor**.** That is the effect of faith. As soon as Christ enters, faith is there. Only then, when God dwells in man, does he work with us. When God gives the power to believe, he has given faith to man. We therefore stand by what the Scripture says: “This is the work of God, that you believe”. John 6:29, Further, “You, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time”. 1 Peter 1:4-5 And who can count all the passages of the Scriptures in which it is said that God works faith? It is precisely to those who believe that the Savior says: "Without me you can do nothing”. [John 15:5]

So these three points stand fast:

1. God has acquired righteousness and has decided to give it to us.
2. Then He also had it preached and offered to the human race.
3. Finally, He also creates the hand by which we grasp it.

It is also God's work that man remains in faith and grace. So then, man did not make righteousness himself, nor did he get it himself, nor did he grasp it himself, but God Himself has presented it, and also created the hand in which He puts it. Thus God is All in All. And we will have nothing else to do for all eternity but to offer Him our thanksgiving that He has justified and saved us sinners by grace. Every true Christian already says it now: he cannot understand that God has chosen him out of thousands and brought him to true knowledge. How much greater will our astonishment be when we see the depths of God's mercy before us. Everyone will only be able to speak: How wonderful it is that I am in heaven! I cannot even explain it to myself.

> It is the infinite mercy,
> That surpasses all thought;
> It is the open arms of love
> Of Him who leans towards sinners,
> Whose heart always breaks,
> We come or we do not come. (See *The Lutheran Hymnal*, 385:2)

To say that faith is a meritorious work or a meritorious assurance is one and the same thing, and both are ungodly speech. When the law of faith is spoken of in Romans 3:27, it is an antanaclasis, that is, a way of speaking in which a word that someone has used incorrectly is also used, but with a different meaning attached to it, so that the former sees that he has used the word incorrectly. Thus, for example, the Jews spoke of God's works. But because they were self-righteous people, they understood this to mean

works of the law, by which they would be saved**.** The Savior takes the word out of their mouths, and to rebuke them properly, he says to them: This is the work of God, that ye believe. You speak, he wants to say, of works that bring salvation: I will show you which is the right work that brings salvation: “believe”, i.e. do nothing. It is the same with this passage: Where is the glory now? It is gone. By what law? By the law of works? Not so, but by the law of faith. This is a holy mockery of the apostle, with which he wants to say: You miserable babblers, you want to appear before God with your paltry works and like to have glory. You also think you have glory because you keep the law. So you do have glory, but certainly not before God. For only one work counts before him, namely faith in the "Son of God, and that is because God himself works it.

This is just like someone who presents himself in the church as if he were the richest and who therefore demands that everything must go according to his will. But I would know that he had a lot of debts, and I would say to him: It is true, you are very rich, but certainly in debt. So the apostle of faith also calls the law a law. Some people might think that the law of faith only applies to the New Testament, but in the Old Testament it was not the law of faith but the law of Moses that applied. But this is not the case. Christ is also the reason for justification in the Old Testament, as it says in Scripture: The Lamb slain before the world began.

**[7. The Necessity of Regeneration, Sanctification and Good Works.]** ^

*[A. Regeneration]*

We now moved on to the 7th point of the 3rd thesis. Just as it is only through the doctrine of the Lutheran Church that all glory is given to God alone, this also applies to our Church's doctrine of regeneration.

If we Lutherans were to teach that a person could enter heaven in the state of sin and godlessness, that would be a teaching that would dishonor God. This would be a horrible kingdom of God, where the ungodly, fornicators, thieves, liars, murderers and robbers, who do not want to know anything about God, would find themselves in the fellowship of God and His holy angels for eternity. Then God's heaven would be a pigsty. We do teach that man is justified and saved by grace alone through faith alone, but we also teach that where this faith is, man also becomes a new creature, which is produced by regeneration. If faith does not have this effect, that it transforms man, then this is not the faith of which Scripture usually speaks, but the faith of which James speaks, that it is dead in itself. The Jesuits maintain that we teach: “Live as you will, only believe; works are not necessary, neither are rebirth and regeneration, but only say

to the pastor, ‘I believe’, and he will say, ‘Go in peace; all is well’". Of course, if we had such a teaching, God's honor would be terribly defiled. But these rascals know well that they are lying and that this is not our teaching. Rather, we teach that as soon as a person is in the true faith, he is also a new person. Thus the Lord said to Nicodemus: "You must be born again of water and the Spirit. When Nicodemus became extremely distraught, he made it clearer and clearer to him. Finally he comes out with the whole thing: Just as Moses lifted up a serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that all who believe in Him may not perish but may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, etc., John 3:14-16. The original text says “For so”. This “For” is very important, for it indicates that the regeneration is nothing other than the living faith which the Holy Spirit works. And it is impossible that, when one has come to living faith, his heart should not become joyful and merry in God, that he should not say, "Farewell, world, to your pleasure and joy. I have now found something else in which I delight, namely Christ and his grace. In him I have rest, peace, comfort, happiness and salvation.

Oh, how would it be possible if someone had fallen into a horrible cesspool, and a man saw it, jumped in after him into the horrible hole, caught him and lifted him out, and he now saw how his rescuer himself fell into the horrible pool of filth and suffocated in the dung, that such a rescued man could laugh about it and now say: What did he intend to do with me? Why didn't he leave me in it? No, such a person would have to be entirely of Satan. Rather, he would have to think: Oh, if only my rescuer were still alive, how I would thank him! Oh, that he had perished so miserably! But the Son of God has done more for us. He was stuck in the devil's cesspool and perished, and only because He was God was this bite too hard for the infernal Leviathan. Christ punched a hole through his [Leviathan’s] body and rose again. How would it be possible to believe this from the heart and yet despise Christ? To ask nothing of the heavenly Father, but to keep company with God's enemies? No, that is not possible. One can speak with the mouth: I believe, but such mouth-faith brings no one to heaven, but certainly to hell. No, he who believes in this love with all his heart, weeps over the excess of God's love and thanks him. Whoever believes in this love from the heart receives divine powers for a new life.

What we Lutherans understand by true faith is what Luther says in his Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. Wesley was once converted through this passage. He came to America to convert the Indians,

but he found that he himself had not yet been converted. After some time, he returned to Europe and was walking through the streets of London one evening. He hears singing in the basement of a house. He goes in and finds Herrnhutters there reading Luther's preface to Paul's Epistle to the Romans. There is also this passage where Luther describes faith. As he hears it, he says to himself: I still lack this faith. But it is not long before he experiences the power of divine grace, comes to faith and becomes a different person. This passage by Luther is a true hymn to faith. One can confidently ask anyone to show such a description of faith in another human book. There is none like it again.

Luther writes [St. L. 14, 99; AE 35, 370-371]: "Faith is not the human delusion and dream that some take for faith. — And when they see that neither improvement of life nor good works follow, and yet can hear and speak much of faith, they fall into error and say: Faith is not enough, one must do works if one is to be pious and saved. This is what happens when they hear the gospel, so they fall into it, and by their own efforts form a thought in their hearts that says: I believe. But just as it is a human figment and thought which the heart never realizes, so it does nothing, and no improvement follows afterwards. But faith is a divine work in us, which transforms and regenerates from God, John 1:13, and kills the old Adam, making us completely different people in heart, courage, mind and all powers, and bringing with it the Holy Spirit. Oh, faith is a living, active, powerful thing, so that it is impossible that it should not work good without ceasing. Nor does it ask whether good works are to be done, but before it is asked, it has done them and is always doing them. But he who does not do such works is a faithless man, groping and looking around for faith and good works, and knows neither what faith nor good works are, yet babbles and chatters many words about faith and good works. Faith is a living, bold confidence in God's grace, so certain that it will die a thousand times over. And such confidence and knowledge of divine grace makes one cheerful, defiant and joyful toward God and all creatures, which the Holy Spirit does through faith." — A believer is a perverse person. He talks to God as if he were talking to his own kind. God already understands him. He knows how to deal with him. He laughs at the world, the devil, death and hell. As Gerhard says in that hymn:

'The world is a laughing stock to me,
With its great wrath.
It is angry and can do nothing,
All work is lost.
The gloom does not cloud
My heart and face.
Misfortune is my light,
The night is my sunlight. [*The Lutheran Hymnal*, 192:5]

"Therefore, without compulsion, man becomes willing and eager to do good to everyone, to serve everyone, to suffer all kinds of things, to love and praise God, who has shown him such grace. So that it is impossible to separate works from faith, yes, as impossible as burning and shining can be separated from fire." — Someone may try, but he will not be able to do it. In the same way, where God has kindled the fire of faith, it shines out of eyes, countenances, words and all works, and we do not know what we would like to do to please God. — [Luther]: "Therefore beware of your own false thoughts and idle chatterers, who want to be wise about faith and good works and make judgments, and are the greatest fools. Ask God to work faith in you, otherwise you will probably remain without faith forever, thinking and doing whatever you want or can." (Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. XIV, 114. F.; [St. L. 14, 99-100; AE 35, 371])

This clearly shows that it is not only the enthusiasts who know that man must be born anew. Luther also experienced and taught this. And the whole Lutheran Church, so far as it includes true Lutherans, teaches nothing else than that God closes the door of heaven to all those who are not born again. Thirty years ago there was no living Lutheran Church in this country. The enthusiasts took advantage of this and sought out the Lutherans, but with the truth they also brought their errors. Things are different today. God has called a living Lutheran Church into being. Where there is one, the enthusiasts can do little. Living Christians also know that they do not need to go anywhere else to look for good, because they will find it in their mother's house. With the enthusiasts, on the other hand, they find not only good, but also poison, from which they can die eternal death.

The Roman Church also distorts the doctrine of regeneration. Although it says that we are born again through Baptism, it does not even mention that faith must be generated. According to its doctrine, it erases original sin and takes away its character of sin. It also says that when an adult is converted, his natural powers are supported by the impartation of the first grace to such an extent that his good works now correspond perfectly to God's requirements, and he thus becomes partaker of the righteousness that is valid before God. This is not regeneration in the proper sense, and because they say that only the nature of sin is taken away from original sin, according to them no new creation takes place in Baptism.

This is also the case with the enthusiasts. For them, regeneration is not the production of faith, but they feel something, and in their imagination they think this is regeneration. The doctrine of the Swedenborgians, according to which man actually regenerates himself, is completely terrible. Oh, how shameful such teachings are, since they

rob God of the honor of creating and preserving a new life through the Holy Spirit for the sake of Christ until He completes it in eternal life**!**

It should also be mentioned how the Methodists very often accuse us of the error of saying that Baptism is regeneration. This is not true. Nor is it a correct doctrine. Rather, we teach that it works regeneration, and only in those who believe. Anyone who has not received Baptism in faith is not born again. Therefore, do not confuse the terms with one another. It is therefore a shameful distortion of our doctrine when Methodists accuse us of the same thing and tell us that Lutherans have taken the easy way out with regeneration. We certainly believe that we were once truly born again when we were baptized in childhood. For there is no willful resistance in children. But when a person has grown up and attained self-consciousness, and then becomes fond of the world, he loses his rebirth again, and must then be reborn once more. If a person perseveres in the grace of Baptism, he has no need to convert again afterwards, but he always needs the word of grace anew for his inner man, otherwise he will die, just as a child must die without food. And such a person who has died twice, as the Scriptures say [John 3:3], must then be born again to new life. So it is not everyone who is baptized who is born again, but everyone was once born again in their childhood. If he received Baptism as an adult without faith, he was not born again. The Savior did not say: water and the Spirit is the rebirth, but: you must be born again of water and the Spirit. And Paul says of Baptism that it is “washing of regeneration” [Titus 3:5]. So he does not call it regeneration, but a “washing of regeneration”. Why does he not call it regeneration, but a “washing of regeneration”? Because something is worked through it. It is not a bath in which the body is washed from bodily impurities, but the soul is washed from sins, a blessed, heavenly bath. Baptism should therefore not be made into a new work. What saves us is Christ alone. We would therefore trample this teaching of ours underfoot if we were to teach otherwise. When the Lord says that ‘he who does not believe will be condemned’ [Mark 16:16], this is true even in this life. An unbeliever is already a damned person. And that only he who believes will be saved, the Lord reinforces by saying: He who does not believe will be condemned.

That the sects think so little of Baptism is because they do not believe that Baptism is the means of regeneration. They put more emphasis on their “anxious bench” than on Holy Baptism, and want to be saved by their own means and not by the means that God has ordained. One would hardly believe that there could be a true Christian among them,

since they so blaspheme God's honor. Yet they are not to be judged, but pitied. They are under God's judgment. O how fortunate we are to have pure knowledge by the grace of God!

An example was given of a Methodist who had spoken out against a Lutheran pastor, saying that Baptism was of little use. How can one say that about God's things! That is blasphemous. They are also wrong to separate the Word from the water. They say that we must be born again by the Spirit. But isn't the Holy Spirit involved in Baptism, isn't the Word of God involved? A Methodist, who did not want to admit that baptism is a power to give birth to children again and that this must happen later, answered the question as to when it happens with them: "About when they are seven years old". It doesn't help them either, even if you bring them evidence from God's Word, they still stick to their bare assertions. But that is the terrible thing about the Methodists, that they accuse us of teaching nothing about the new birth, or of teaching it in a false way, while they know that they are lying. But otherwise they can keep their true Christians, who are still among them, in no other way than by telling them that the Lutherans want to enter the kingdom of heaven without regeneration, without repentance and without conversion; so that then such poor Christians must get the idea: Oh, I will beware of the Lutherans! Such godless Methodist preachers then tell their parishioners, who may have had an unbelieving rationalist as a preacher in Germany, that the Lutheran pastors are of such a nature, while the latter is nothing other than an enemy of the truth, a wolf in the sheepfold. These are, they say of us, their shepherds, while such are the greatest enemies of our church, who only destroy and devastate it, and which the poor congregations in Germany must take, since they have no right to choose their pastors themselves, but they are forced upon them. Is it not terrible that they make us out to be such rationalists? But truly, they will have to answer for it in that day. Where did they get the good that is still to be found among them? They owe it to the Lutheran Reformation. The rest is nothing but the thoughts of men, which they have smeared. How much do they teach differently now than they did thirty years ago? Such as, for example, confirmation, which they once fought against most bitterly, and which they themselves are now beginning to ape again. They no longer dare to say as much about the “anxious bench” as they used to. This is because the light has shone into their hiding places. Now they can no longer mumble in the dark. But they still don't give the truth the credit. That is the curse of false teaching.

It is to be deplored that in recent times there are also those in the

Lutheran Church who teach that something remains in man from Baptism that cannot be eradicated. Delitzsch, for example, still wants to shake hands with the notorious anti-Christian Wislicenus because he was baptized and therefore carries something within him that is unquenchable. This causes the sects great annoyance. Therefore, do not take offense if we also attack the neo-Lutheran professors. For our whole church would be disgraced if this were really our doctrine. This battle is assigned to us. We must make a serious front against them, even if they are considered great heroes of the faith before the world, while they are only those who undermine the foundation of the faith. Let us not be deceived by their babblings. They do not represent God's work, but human thoughts. As much as we respect science, we do not want to be deterred from opposing it because we are not as learned as they are. God has given us the light, so we want to attack them despite their mockery.

*[B. Sanctification]* ^

We now moved on to the part of the thesis that deals with sanctification. So far we have dealt with how God's glory is revealed in his unspeakable love, with which he has mercy on us, how he has carried out our salvation, which he had decided upon, how he has ordained the means of grace, and how he has given us the hand with which we can grasp it. As glorious as all these things are, it cannot be denied that if the Christian religion contained nothing else, the full and true glory of God would not be revealed. It is also necessary that man should be shown how he is made holy and renewed in the image of God. Christianity would be a terrible religion if it only covered sin with a cloak and thus received man into heaven. Holy Scripture teaches most clearly that the ultimate purpose of the whole work of redemption is sanctification. Pardon, reconciliation and justification are not the ultimate goal, but only the means and the way by which sanctification is made possible. God forgives us sin so that we can come out of sin. Christ is our Savior not only because he frees us from guilt and punishment, but also because he frees us completely from sin. This only happens completely in that life. Here in this life all God's children must lament to the end: I am carnal, and sold under sin, etc., Rom. 7:14. No matter how earnestly one fights against sin, one is never completely freed from it here. The Methodist teaching that one can become completely holy and perfect on earth is a terrible heresy. It obliterates the merit of Christ. From the time you become perfect, you no longer need Christ. For where one does not need forgiveness of sins, because one imagines one no longer sins,

one also has no need of a Savior who forgives sin. Even if the Methodists do not want to admit it, the latter remains true. We are sinners unto death, but sin must not dominate us. As it is written: Sin shall not have dominion over you, Rom. 6:14. Whoever still allows himself to be dominated by a single sin is still under the wrath of God.

The life and walk of a Christian is a pursuit of sanctification. As Paul also says: Pursue sanctification, Heb. 12:14. The perfect saints, on the other hand, no longer need to do so, they already have it. This pursuit applies to every Christian; anyone who does not pursue it, or thinks that he no longer needs to do so, but has already achieved everything, is not a Christian. Anyone who makes the doctrine of justification a resting place and thinks I can live in sin and shame is not a Christian. To him the precious sermon of free grace becomes an odor of death unto death, instead of an odor of life unto life. The Lutheran Church knows nothing of this. Rather, as decisively as it teaches that we are justified by God for Christ's sake, free of charge and by grace, it also demands sanctification from every Christian.

We cannot thank God enough that this doctrine of sanctification was brought forth at the time of the Reformation. Luther found a time that lacked above all the message of grace. The Roman priests were not concerned with the salvation of souls, but only with the promotion of their rule. They had crushed the people with the law, tortured their consciences and presented Christ before their eyes not as the Savior of sinners but as an angry judge. The only comforting figure was the Virgin Mary. Then Luther appeared with the blessed message of grace. That man is justified without the work of the law through faith alone was the motto of his life. But he also taught that one must do good works and pursue sanctification. But if the Antinomians had not stood up, Luther would probably never have given such powerful testimony to the necessity of sanctification. God once wanted to thoroughly reform his church, so he gave Luther the opportunity to bear witness to the necessity of sanctification just as powerfully as he had previously done to the forgiveness of sins by grace. As is always the case in the Church, if a doctrine should become quite dear to her, God allowed the devil to awaken heretics who had to attack this doctrine. Such was the case with Agricola. At first he was in complete agreement with Luther. But, as often happens, he fell from one extreme to the other. First he was a papist teacher of works, now he became an enemy of the law. He said that the law belonged in the town hall, even on the gallows. He even secretly pronounced it: Luther had not yet

reached the Gospel properly; the Reformation must proceed even more thoroughly and the law in the church must be completely abolished. Luther was not at all aware of this. After all, Agricola had been his companion for a long time. But finally it came out that he was taking the Gospel to the flesh and that he wanted nothing to do with sanctification. Luther's attitude towards the Antinomians can be seen from the following passage:

"My Antinomians preach very finely, and (as I cannot think otherwise) with right earnestness, of the grace of Christ, of forgiveness of sins, and what more is to be said of the article of salvation. But they flee from this consequence like the devil, that they should tell people about the third article, sanctification, that is, the new life in Christ." [St. L. 16, 2241; AE 41, p. 113]

He wants to say: First you admit that Christ is your Savior, and then you deny that he really came to redeem you, in that he “should” redeem you from guilt, but not from the dominion of sin. But this is nothing but empty talk, for there is no such Christ, even if you call him your Savior a thousand times.

"For they think that we should not frighten or grieve people, but always preach comfortingly about the grace and forgiveness of sins in Christ, and by all means avoid these or similar words: ‘Do you hear this? You want to be a Christian, and yet remain an adulterer, a fornicator, a complete swine, proud, avaricious, usurer, envious, revengeful, malicious’; but they say: ‘Do you hear this? You are an adulterer, a fornicator, a miser, or any other sinner, if you only believe, you are saved, you must not fear the law, Christ has fulfilled it all’. Dear one, tell me, does that not mean admitting the fallacy and denying the corollary? Yes, in the same sentence it means to take away and nullify Christ when he is preached at the highest." [ibid. ]

This is a terrible word for such a Lutheran preacher, who thinks that one should always preach very comfortingly; for he preaches Christ the least when he seems to preach Him the highest.

"And all is but yes and no in one and the same matter. For such a Christ is nothing and nowhere, who died for such sinners who, after the forgiveness of sins, do not turn from their sins and live a new life."

There is no such Christ who would have come to comfort people about their sins by telling them: "I have obtained grace for you, what harm is it that you sin? Just live as you wish. This would be a Savior from hell and not from heaven. For he does not save men from sins, but leaves them in sins.

“So they preach Christ finely in Nestorian and Eutychian dialectics, that Christ is, and yet he is not, and are fine Easter preachers, but shameful Pentecost preachers.”

49 [1875 Western District essay by Walther]

Nestorius correctly claimed that Christ was true God and man in one person. And yet, he said, one must not speak: Mary gave birth to God. For, he said, what she gave birth to was only a man and not God. But if Mary only gave birth to a man and not to God, then Christ is not God and man in one person. Nestorian and Eutychian dialectics therefore means first admitting something, from which another proposition follows, which one does not admit. This is also the case here. The Antinomians admitted that Christ was the Savior from sin, but that they had to be converted from sin, they wanted to know nothing about that.

These words: “and are fine Easter preachers, but shameful Pentecost preachers” — should be taken to heart by every Lutheran preacher in the most serious way. Woe to us if we only know how to speak beautifully about how Christ has acquired grace, but not also about how necessary the work of the Holy Spirit is in us, through which this redemption is manifested in us.

“For they preach nothing of the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, but only of the redemption of Christ, when Christ (whom they preach highly, as is fitting) is Christ, or has purchased redemption from sins and death, so that the Holy Spirit should make us new men from the old Adam, that we should die to sins and live to righteousness, as St. Paul teaches, Rom. 6:2 ff, beginning and increasing here on earth, and accomplishing it there.”

This is why Christ has obtained forgiveness of sins for us, to make us new people. In heaven we no longer need forgiveness, for there we will be like God. We do not become holy, as the enthusiasts teach, by putting away all sin here, but we teach what John teaches: we will be like God, for we will see him as he is. This says: "Dear believers, as soon as you die, you are completely holy. When your body decays, a process takes place whereby you attain sanctification. The old Adam does not decay, but when you see God, you will be so illuminated by his holiness that you will be completely holy. Just as a body that is dark in itself then becomes full of light as the light shines on it, so it is with us in relation to sanctification. Or, to illustrate this with an example: suppose I am in a dark cellar into which only a few rays of light fall, my body will also remain dark. If, on the other hand, I place myself in the rays of light that penetrate from outside, my body will also become a little light. But if I step out of the cellar and stand in the bright rays of the midday sun, my whole body will be light. So here too we have only a few rays of the knowledge of God, and therefore our sanctification is only imperfect. For it is through the knowledge of God that our sanctification

is effected. Insofar as a person recognizes God, he is holy. Here we recognize him only in part, therefore our sanctification here is also still imperfect. In eternity, however, our knowledge of God will be perfect, and there we too will be completely holy. But of course, sanctification must already be present with us here, otherwise we will not attain it for all eternity. He who dies without God is eternally without God. He who dies without grace is eternally without grace. He who dies without sanctification is eternally full of sin. Perfect sanctification on earth is not possible. If the same were demanded of us, we would all be lost. But we must be dead to sin so that we do not enjoy any sin. It is true that even a true Christian may still feel a sinful desire within himself, but he should not think that he is therefore not a Christian. This desire is only an impulse of the old man in him; the new man fights against it. Whoever does not regard sin as an enemy that wants to break into the land and at whose approach one begins to trumpet loudly to call everyone together not to let the enemy in, is not a Christian. The battle of the flesh and the spirit is the true mark of a true Christian. Even in this battle the spirit does not always triumph, but is often overcome by the flesh: if only we do not allow ourselves to be dominated by the flesh.

"For Christ has not only merited for us grace, but also the gift of the Holy Spirit, that we might not only have forgiveness of sins, but also cessation from sins (John 1:16, 17). Whoever therefore does not cease from sin, but remains in his former evil nature, must have a different Christ from the antinomians. The true Christ is not there, and if all the angels cry out vainly, "Christ! Christ!' and must be condemned with his new Christ." (Walch. XVI, 2741 f.)

He has a new Christ who preaches such a Christ, who delivers us from guilt and punishment, but not from the dominion and filth of sin. Justification and sanctification are closely connected. Therefore, it cannot be true what that superintendent once said: "I have the grace of justification, but not the grace of sanctification.

How terrible it is that the Roman Church has a doctrine of justification which is nothing other than a doctrine of sanctification. According to its doctrine, sanctification does not come about by the fact that justification produces a new man who walks in a new life, but rather that the first grace and the ability to love are poured into man so that he can storm heaven. In this way, however, God's glory is taken away and attributed to man. The worst thing about them is that by faith they understand only the historical.

51 [1875 Western District essay by Walther]

Therefore our doctrine of justification is a mystery to them, which they cannot comprehend. That is why they are frightened when we say that we are justified by faith alone. But when we speak of faith, we are also speaking of regeneration. For the rebirth is nothing other than the birth of faith. Now the Romans think that if everyone who believes is born again, then it is an easy thing to be born again, whereas this is precisely what we can see from the fact that faith is not what many people understand it to be. Precisely because regeneration does not come from us, but from the Holy Spirit, faith is also not our work, but that of the Holy Spirit. Regeneration and faith coincide. If the one who has not been born again is not to see the kingdom of God, then nothing but faith can enable me to see the kingdom of God.

As soon as faith begins, sanctification also begins. The two cannot be separated, any more than light and fire can be separated. The thief on the cross is a good example of this. For as soon as he believed, he also began to punish the other evildoer. Otherwise the Scriptures could not say: “Follow…holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord”. [Hebrews 12:14] It does not say: without good works, but: without sanctification you cannot be saved. Hence Paul also says: “Those whom he has justified, he has also glorified”. [Romans 8:30] This glorification means nothing other than perfect sanctification in eternal life. Likewise, the Savior says of the Holy Spirit: He will glorify me. This happens in sanctification.

To the remark as to whether the use of such sharp expressions as “he is not a Christian” was not to be feared by those under attack, the reply was made: It could not be prevented that they would misunderstand such words, otherwise they would not be challenged. For every temptation is a lack of divine light and knowledge; otherwise one could speak until death: “I rejoice in the Lord, and am joyful in my God”. [Isaiah 61:10] But I must not abandon the doctrine just because someone is offended by it. Paul says clearly: “Sin will have no dominion over you”, etc. Rom 6:14. If I am a Christian, sin can attack me like a robber. But I do not treat him as my king. I give him [the king] what he demands. But I am not at the will of the robber, but try to slip away from him, draw my pistol and say to him: "Come now! I do not value my life so highly, but I am in a state of self-defense, and must not do every street thief's bidding." Anyone who does not stand against sin as against a robber, but as against his superiors, is not a Christian. We must preach like this, otherwise we will strengthen the security of the secure. Otherwise the hypocrite might think he is going to heaven too. That is also a danger to the soul, which we have to take into account. Or should I, in order to comfort

only the challenged, let the secure go to hell? There is thunder and lightning in the pulpit, that has to happen, otherwise you are not a faithful preacher. We must first do the law as a foreign work before we can comfort the brokenhearted. This is especially true for our time. Things are not the same for us Christians now as they were at the beginning of the Reformation. Luther found a poor, shattered people who, like Israel, had run out of water from the bottle, as he himself wrote. In his own words, he had to preach grace and nothing but grace. But when Germany was filled with the gospel, he saw with horror how security and recklessness took over. Just read his *House Postils* and see how he is often violently zealous in it, while in the *Church Postils* he simply pours out grace. Our congregations are usually such that we can bring them more of the message of grace, but in new congregations we need the law more. Nor should we refrain from preaching the law in old congregations, not only because Christians easily fall back into security, but also because new members are constantly being added. The fearfulness in such a case arises from the fact that the Pietists speak of different degrees; but it is unfounded if only the preaching is otherwise pure. One says to such a person: You no longer love sin, but would prefer to be rid of it. This will not confuse them any more than if you demand such a certain degree from them. If, for example, someone who is afflicted and has an unreconciled heart wanted to complain about it, we would have to comfort him. But if he said, “I will not be reconciled,” we would have to answer him, "First be converted”. The example was given of one who was afflicted, whose heart was troubled because he did not love God. When he was comforted, he simply said, “I am not doing it,” and went away crushed. But he did not say, “I will not”, but rather: “I, a poor damned man, am not able to”.

We preachers must certainly remember that we Christians are made up of two people, the old and the new; otherwise we will never be able to practice true pastoral care. All sins are still rooted in the Christian. Out of the heart come evil thoughts, etc., says the Lord in Matt. 15:19. This does not only apply to the ungodly, but anyone who has a heart should take note of it. Whoever does not believe this is a miserable Pharisee. If someone who has been spiritually disturbed comes and complains that he does not love God, answer him, "I believe it, but I do not. At first he will be dismayed. Now say to him: I do not do it according to my old man, who cannot love God, but hates Him. I also have another man, the new man, who loves God and hates the old man. Whoever does not have this is not a Christian.

It should also be borne in mind that the spiritually disturbed are always in great danger of either despairing or falling into sin. They have to endure the most terrible hardship. Some cannot endure this, but to numb themselves they give themselves over to sin. This must be pointed out to him and he must be told: Be careful that you do not give in to sin. Paul so beautifully describes the inner being of a Christian with the words: "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do". Romans 7:19. This always applies to the whole person. Whoever can say: I do not will the evil that I do, is a Christian. So it remains with the Christian until death. Anyone who thinks otherwise is a fool. But we cannot thank God enough that we have this passage. It gives us a deep insight into the heart of the apostle and shows us how he too was imperfect. The Methodists, of course, find it very uncomfortable. They try to make do by explaining it from the state before his conversion; otherwise they would be holier than the apostle. So it is done by [William] Nast in his commentary and even by a Neander. But this is refuted by Paul himself in the following words: "I delight in God's law according to the inward man". [Romans 7:22] And further: "So then I serve the law of God with my mind, but the law of sin with my flesh". [Romans 7:25]

Now since we derive all sanctification from faith, and do not teach that we can improve ourselves by our own strength or even become perfect here, but that the Holy Spirit equips us with new powers and purifies us more and more, until He will make us perfect there in eternal life, we also give all glory to God in this doctrine. Let us learn from Luther not only how to preach faith, but also how to preach sanctification.

*[C. Good Works.]* ^

In the doctrine of good works, too, we give all glory to God, and in this, too, our church proves itself to be the true one.

The Lutheran Church is accused of being very zealous in teaching justification, but little about sanctification and especially too little about good works; this is its weakness. However, we do not condemn good works, but only those that are not such, or those in general by which one seeks to earn merit with God. This is rightly done by us. If God has promised something to good works, it is out of pure goodness and is a reward of grace. Just as it is with a father who does not want his child to be idle, keeps him busy and orders him to carry the shavings out and in, from which he may not even benefit, so God also keeps us busy without benefiting from us. And just as a father praises such a child and gives him a piece of candy, so

God also rewards our works out of pure goodness**.** If anything could be earned by our works, it would make God's grace an article of commerce, God a junk dealer and the Church a junk shop. Even Adam in paradise, if he had remained faithful to God, would not have earned eternal life, but would have obtained it out of pure goodness. You can't say "out of pure grace", because grace presupposes guilt. What would have happened out of goodness then, happens out of grace now that we have fallen. Hence the unbelievers call Christianity a beggar's religion, of which they therefore want to know nothing. As [Johann Gottfried] Seume expressed himself in such a godless sense, he did not want to beg for mercy from God, but would say to Him: "I have done this, give me my reward!" God will certainly give such people their reward and say to them: "Depart from Me, you cursed, into the eternal fire!" [Matt. 25:31]

Our Lutheran Church's doctrine of good works is the right one because it gives God all the glory, firstly by separating everything false from the doctrine of good works, which destroys God's majesty and independence. Man can never lay claim to a reward, but can only hold up to God the promises which He has given us in His Word by grace.

In the Lutheran Church we give God the glory by calling only those good works that really are good works. We only call that a good work when we either do something that God has commanded us to do or leave something that he has forbidden. Everything that the papists devise for themselves, fasting, monasticism, pilgrimages, etc., are shameful works; likewise what the enthusiasts devise for themselves. Such works are nothing but pure sin, since they arise from lust for reward and are directed against God's majesty; because they forbid something that God has not forbidden, and which therefore no creature can forbid, and because they command something that God has not commanded, and which therefore no conscience can bind.

Furthermore, we give glory to God by teaching that only those works which God does are good.

And finally, by teaching that only that is a good work which is done to the glory of God and for the good of men.

We can see how seriously Luther demanded good works from the following passage: "We say that God saves us through faith alone, without regard to works. Why then does St. Peter say that he judges not according to the person but according to the works?" — This seems to be quite contrary to Luther's teaching, and yet it agrees with it in the most glorious way. — "Answer: What we have taught about how faith alone justifies is undoubtedly true, since it is so clear from Scripture that it cannot be denied. It is also true that the apostle says here (1 Peter 1:17) that God judges according to works. But it

should certainly be taken for that: Where faith is not, there can be no good work; and again, that where there are no good works, there is no faith. Therefore He joins faith and good works together, so that in the two there is the sum of the whole Christian life. As you now live, so it will be with you, and God will judge you accordingly. Therefore, even though God judges us according to our works, it remains true that works alone are the fruit of the tree, by which one can see where faith or unbelief is; therefore God will judge you by your works and convince you that you have believed or not believed." — Many hypocrites shamefully abuse the doctrine of faith, thinking that if they only say to God: “I have believed”, then all is well; he will not ask about their works. But God will answer them: "Now I am not asking how you believed, but what you did”. And from this He will draw the conclusion as to whether you have also believed. Otherwise the devil might say afterwards: How can you save him? But God will show the devil and the wicked from the works of his believers that they have had true faith. — [Luther continues:] "Just as a liar cannot be judged and condemned on the basis of his words; nor is it evident that he does not become a liar by his words, but was a liar before he spoke a lie, for the lie must come from the heart into the mouth. Therefore understand this saying most simply, that works are fruits and signs of faith, and that God judges people according to such fruits, which must surely follow, so that it may be seen publicly where faith or unbelief is." — God sees faith, but we do not see it. But one day He will reveal it when He brings the good works of Christians to light, so that the wicked will marvel at them, even though they once noticed nothing but weakness in the believers. Then God will reveal the counsel of the heart, i.e. it will become apparent what a new heart the Christian has received through faith. — “God will not judge whether you are called a Christian or whether you have been baptized, but will ask you: If you are a Christian, tell me, where are the fruits so that you can prove your faith?” (Luther in the interpretation of 1 Peter 1:17. Walch. IX, 672 f. [St. L. 9, 993-994; *AE* 30, 34-35])

If one always hears the message of grace, one can easily fall into the trap of disregarding good works. A true Christian rejoices when he is warned of this danger. He needs such salt that he does not become lazy.

How highly Luther placed works is also evident from the following passage: “Behold, how finely they (the Anabaptists) teach of good works; say, they give their good works for a penny.” — (But they were not even worth a penny.) — "Thus they want to be our monkeys,

and teach like us, because they have heard that we teach that good works do not make pious, nor do they blot out sin, nor reconcile God. But the devil makes his addition to this, and despises good works so much that he wants to sell them all for a penny. Then I praise God my Lord that the devil, in his cleverness, must so shamefully abuse and deceive himself. We teach, then, that God's reconciliation, his making pious, his blotting out sin, is such a great, high, glorious work that Christ alone, the Son of God, must do it, and is actually a pure, unique, special work of the one true God and His grace, for which our works are and can do nothing. But that therefore good works should be nothing, or be worth a penny, who has ever heard or taught this except from the devil's lying mouth?" [St. L. 14, 310; not in Am. Ed.]

We preachers should remember that it is part of our task to emphasize the necessity and high value of good works; otherwise we are neglecting a high duty and doing great harm to our congregations. In justification we should trample all works underfoot, but outside of justification we should emphasize works. Many praise the gospel, but they are lazy about good works. They think it is enough if they go to church and hear God's Word; but if something is to be done for the kingdom of God, they are so shamefully stingy that they would rather have their finger cut off than give anything for it. If there is something to be done in the church, they have no time. If they have to do something for their neighbor for which they get nothing, they also have no time. They don't go to the church meeting, they speak: This can be done without me, and thus prove that they lack the right seriousness in Christianity; otherwise they would be happy and cheerful to do good. Such do not consider the harm they do to themselves, not through their powerlessness but through their sluggishness to do good works.

The apostle uses the expression Phil 4:17: “I desire fruit that may abound to your account.” So God has, as it were, a book in His hands, in which every good work, every prayer, every Lord's Prayer, every sigh, every tear, every gift that I have given for His kingdom out of true love for God, every thanksgiving to God, every act of charity toward my neighbor, every reconciliation with my enemy is recorded. Yes, whatever work it may be, everything is written in it, even the glass of water with which I gave to the thirsty for the sake of Christ shall not be forgotten. What a great sum of good works will be found among true Christians! They themselves will be amazed at it. But the sluggish will see what a great difference there is between those who are always ready to serve everyone and those who are not, not in terms of salvation but in terms of glory.

**57** [1875 Western District essay by Walther]

True Christianity consists not only in diligent church attendance. As good as this is in itself, it is only the means to it. Many a man reads his morning and evening prayer, or goes to a prayer meeting, or even gives up smoking, and now thinks what a good work he has done. But it is not a question of what we regard as good works, but what God regards as good works. He demands works from us that come from love for Him and gratitude. That is a big difference. But he then wants to reward such works in the richest possible way. As it says in Scripture: God will give “exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think” [Ephesians 3:20]. And in another place: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us”. [Romans 8:18] Therefore, no preacher should shed a tear when oppressed by his congregation. He will marvel at the glory that awaits him in return in eternal life. And if it were possible, he would say: Oh, if only I had suffered more! Let no one be indifferent to the affliction that befalls him, but if he suffers for Christ's sake, let him rejoice as much as he can, for it is all in his account. Let no one consider a Christian a fool because he puts up with everything. For he who is despised here will one day be seen there in great glory. But let him who is slow to do good know that he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly. We must reproach people with this. Otherwise the devil will blind them so that they forget all about sowing. We should not wrongly rely on God's mercy and neglect works, because 1. we will easily lose grace; 2. we will show our ingratitude to God, who requires us to do them; 3. we will be surprised at what we have in eternal life that others do not have.

Some will lose the jewel because they think that good works are not necessary. They are certainly not necessary for salvation, but otherwise they are necessary. Anyone who denies this is not a Lutheran. According to Scripture, Christians strive for eternal life through good works.

Luther continues: "I would not give one of my sermons, one of my lessons, one of my Lord's Prayer, no matter how small works I have always done, or still do, for the whole world's goods; yes, I consider it more precious than my life, which is and should be dearer to everyone than the whole world. For if it is a good work, God has done it through me and in me. If God has done it and it is God's work, what is the whole world compared to God and his work? Even if I do not become pious through such a work (for that must first happen through Christ's blood and grace, without works), nevertheless it is done to God for praise and honor, for the benefit and salvation of my neighbor, which cannot be paid for or compared with the world's goods." (Preface to Justi Menii Büchlein von der Wiedertäufer Lehre und Geheimniß. 1530. XIV, 281. f.)

Let no one therefore despise his good works when he knows for certain: “I have done this out of love for You, my God.”.

Note well the principle: Only that is a good work which brings about something good. All self-chosen works are not good works. Some people think that if they enter a monastery they are doing a good work, whereas such a person is nothing but a glutton who spends his life in laziness, begging instead of working. Such a man is of no use to anyone. Once there came a man to Alexander the Great who had great skill in throwing peas a long distance to the head of a needle. He wanted to show his skill to the king and wondered what reward he would receive. But Alexander ordered him to be given a large sack of peas so that the man would have something to do. That's the way the good Lord does it with useless saints who do something for themselves and expect miracles in return.

The best way to test a good work is to ask oneself whether it benefits one's neighbor or whether one does it only because it benefits him. If this is not the case, then it is an ungodly work. Now consider his good works: how many such works do we do? Certainly not enough. We must not forget that it is often said in Scripture that they will be well rewarded. A preacher should not think that he is not allowed to speak of this. The Scriptures themselves speak of it. A Christian needs to be given such support. Therefore we say confidently: Dear brothers, do this work, it will be well rewarded to you in heaven if you do it for God's sake. There is no need to be afraid of making people greedy for rewards. First preach diligently about grace, then you can also preach confidently about the great reward of good works. But if the doctrine of justification is not preached with emphasis, then you can certainly do harm by preaching about works. Good works that come about through threats are not good works. But boldly remind Christians of the reward of grace that the Lord has promised them; then some will certainly find themselves willing to give with joy and pleasure. Our pastors neglect far too much to encourage people to do good works. If one is to appeal to his congregation to contribute their gifts for a certain purpose in the kingdom of God, some people think that this is an uncomfortable work, but it is a blessed work that we should do properly. We should try to get to people's hearts and work to take away all their unwillingness and instead awaken in them a desire and love for good works.

One such request that we could make to our congregations at the present time would be for contributions to the new building of our college. We should ask them to do this and tell them that we are doing it because we

wish that it would one day be in their account. It is true that God can build his kingdom without us. If we do not want to contribute anything, God will not throw up His hands and say, "Now I can do nothing, those on earth will not give me money. He has no need of us, but he will gladly make us his instruments, whom he also wants to reward. Now a pastor says to his congregation: "Because I don't want you to be deprived of this reward, I would like you to give something in return. You would have to reject me as godless if I passed you by. Just as a true Christian feels hurt when a truly needy beggar goes to all the others in the neighborhood and does not come to him. We need the college building most urgently. If we don't want to do it, God may let his work with us go backwards and raise up others to build his kingdom. But do not threaten, but ask the people for the sake of God's mercy, and tell them that it is a grace to give something for God's kingdom, and that you want to give them the opportunity to reap a harvest. This harvest would be abundant.

Once when it turned out in a community that the school was not paying for itself, and in order to get the teacher's salary, even those who had no children were asked to do something, one of them refused to pay a contribution for the school. He was then told that of course it could not be imposed on him, but if one day in heaven the reward for the blessing that had been bestowed by this school was distributed by our Lord Christ, then he would receive no reward for it, but should go away empty-handed, whereupon he also became willing to support the school. This is what it means to encourage good works by offering a reward.

18 [1876 Western District essay by Walther] ^

# Proceedings of the Synod.

According to the resolution of the previous year, the Synod continued its discussion of the theses on the following subject:

**"That only through the doctrine of the Lutheran Church is all glory given to God alone, an incontrovertible proof that it is the only true one."**

These are as follows:

Thesis I.

Since religion is the way of worshipping God, the only true religion is that which in all its teachings gives glory to God alone.

Isaiah 42:8, Romans 1:21, 25, John 7:18, 8:49, Luke 2:14, Romans 3:27, 4:20.

Thesis II.

Since a visible church is an assembly of people who "profess one doctrine and religion", the only true church is the one that gives glory to God alone through all its teachings.

Ps 26:8, Rev 14:6-7, John 5:44.

Thesis III.

Only through the doctrine of the Lutheran Church is all glory given to God alone; this is evident, among other things, from its doctrine:

1. of the Word of God;
2. of the cause of sin, death, hell and damnation;
3. of divine providence;
4. of the general will of God's grace;
5. of the reconciliation and redemption of the human race;
6. the justification of the sinner by grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ without merit of works;
7. the necessity of regeneration, sanctification and good works;
8. **the foundation, validity, power and immutability of the means of grace;**
9. **of conversion;**
10. of the invocation and worship of God;
11. obedience to men in matters of faith and conscience;
12. of the election of grace.

19 [1876 Western District essay by Walther]

The convention went on to

**Thesis III,** point 8.

This reads:

"Only through the doctrine of the Lutheran Church is all glory given to God alone; this is evident, among other things, from its doctrine

Of the foundation, validity, power and immutability of the means of grace."

It was noted:

Whoever wants to be honored in the world, especially for the sake of his religion, should not become a Lutheran! For the Lutheran religion brings no honor before the world; it gives all honor to God alone, but nothing but shame to man. It has the gospel, of which Paul says in Romans 1:16: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes in it." But why does the apostle say: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ"? No doubt because, according to reason, one would have every reason to be ashamed of it, namely because it takes away all honor from man and gives him nothing but shame, but gives honor only to the great God. In another passage Paul says of this doctrine that it is foolishness to the wise world and an offense to the self-righteous, so that it makes the one who accepts it a fool in the eyes of the world and especially an offense to the self-righteous.

But praise be to God that we have no reason to fall away from our church because of this! On the contrary, the fact that its teaching gives glory to God alone, and leaves us men nothing but shame, disgrace and contempt, is precisely the surest sign that it is the right doctrine. For what is religion but a relationship of man to God, by virtue of which he regards himself as nothing, indeed as less than nothing, as a cursed and damned sinner, and recognizes him as the Most High in every respect, to whom alone all glory and honor is due? Scripture tells us that when God had laid the cornerstone of the earth, the morning stars praised him one after the other and all the children of God shouted for Him, Job 38:6-7; and when the Lord Christ came to restore the fallen world, the angels again shouted: "Glory to God in the highest"; that was their first thought. Yes, if we ask the Holy Scriptures what kind of song will be heard when the Church is perfected, when it will stand before the throne of God and triumph, does it perhaps answer that it will then give itself honor and praise? Will the elect perhaps then say: O well for us that we have been so pious, so holy on earth, but now we are also here in heaven? Oh no! The new song, which will resound before Christ's

throne, is quite different. It says: "The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and praise" (Revelation 5:12). But we need not go that far. What is the first commandment other than the proclamation that God alone wants to be honored? For when he calls down from Sinai: "I am the Lord your God, you shall have no other gods before me", he obviously means to say: Recognize, man, you are only my creature; you are clay, I am the potter, and just as the potter can do with the clay what he wants, so I can do with you what I want; you are nothing, and I am everything; everything you have is in my hand; all that is due to you is to throw yourself down on your face and say: “do with me, Lord, what you will!

When we get there, we have returned to God; but as long as a man still seeks his own honor, he does not yet have true religion. This is what the Lord says when he says: "He who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple", Luke 14:33; we are to throw all our own honor, all our own benefit under our feet. Of course, we wretched sinners will never get to the point here on earth where we can completely rid ourselves of our own cursed honor; but it must at least come to that point that everyone hates himself for that very reason. This must be the great burden he carries around with him every day, that he sees: this wretched honoring of self always wants to arise in him, he always wants to rob God of his honor and give it to himself, in a word, he does not want to let God be God.

Therefore there can be no doubt that if it is certain that our Lutheran Church with all its doctrines gives glory to God, then its doctrine is the right one, and it itself the right church; there can be nothing more certain in the world. It is impossible that a doctrine which gives glory to God should be false; for then all piety would have to be false, whose very nature is to give all glory to God; indeed, then there would be no religion at all, but only superstition. This is a very sure touchstone, but therefore also an extremely precious truth. Our poor reason so easily goes astray in its understanding of the divine Word; it asks again and again: have you interpreted this or that passage of Scripture correctly? If I now know that the interpretation honors God alone, then I have a summary proof that it is right, for it is impossible that what honors God can come from the devil. But the reverse is also true, that the doctrine which takes the glory from God is certainly false and from the devil, for that is the devil's work, that is his reign in the world: he wants to take the glory from God and give it to himself. It is true that He often gives people a small part of the glory, but He does so only in order to catch them with it; after all, He then has more than the glory, namely the whole person with body and soul.

All false churches also prove that they are false by

the fact that their main aim is to give glory to man. The Methodists, for example, place the glory and excellence of their religion above all in the fact that they are the holiest and most pious people there are in the world. But what else do they prove by this but that they are the most miserable sect there can be? For by this they evidently renounce the great God and his sole reign in heaven and on earth. In the same way, the papacy makes the Church its god in the form of the pope. Just as the papacy is nothing other than an imitation of the divine government, the pope in particular makes himself God. He demands the same obedience, even in conscience, that the great God demands of all men. But this is precisely the surest proof that the pope is the Antichrist, that he gives himself all the glory, and not merely as a haughty man usually does, but in a truly satanic way, in that he wants to bind the consciences, even the salvation of men, to his sayings. Hence our symbolic books say: “As little as one can worship the devils, so little can one submit to the Pope, for he makes himself God.

That the Lutheran Church can really stand the test that its doctrine proves it to be the only true one, namely by giving all glory to God alone, we have already seen in seven of its main doctrines, but we can also see this

8. in her doctrine of the foundation, validity, power and immutability of the means of grace. (^)

In this doctrine, too, she gives all glory to God alone, and she alone does this, no other church in the world apart from her. For she says not only that we are all saved by grace alone, not only that this grace is acquired for us through Christ, the Son of God and Savior of the world, not only that we receive this grace by faith alone, but also this: that the dear God has ordained certain means in which he has placed this grace and through which He gives it to us, and these means are the Word of God, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. In them is the grace which God has carried in his heart from eternity towards us poor sinners, which Christ has acquired for us; they are the hands with which God presents it to us, so that he may be all in all, and be nothing of which we can boast. This also includes absolution, which is nothing other than the preaching of the Gospel to an individual sinner. We should therefore hold it in high esteem, for in it is the whole Christ, the whole grace of God, the whole righteousness, the whole heaven.

Now the enthusiasts know of no means of grace at all. Likewise, the entire Reformed Church knows nothing of them. Even if it uses the

words "means of grace" [See this blog post on Dr. Albert Mohler, a Southern Baptist.], it understands something quite different from what God's Word and our church understand by it, namely that by which something is worked in the heart of man. However, this is not a means of grace, but a means to initiate the effects of the Holy Spirit in a person, whereas a means of grace is that which brings me the grace of God. For grace is that which is in God's heart, the good pleasure which God bears in His heart for the poor sinner; now the great question is: by what means do I obtain it? Our Church says: I obtain this grace because God has placed it in the means of grace. With these hands he offers us what His dear Son purchased for us on the cross, and if we grasp these hands with the hand of our faith, we have grace. If, on the other hand, we hear that Christ has acquired it for us and we look for it somewhere else, for example by kneeling down in a corner and sighing: oh dear God, send grace down to me from heaven, then we are going the way of enthusiasts and we can never be sure that we have it. Such a person may think he hears the voice of God calling out to him for mercy, but it is the voice of the devil or of his own flesh. How we must therefore thank God for the precious doctrine of the "means of grace"! It shows us most clearly how faithfully God has made sure that we can be absolutely certain that we have grace. For because he has placed it in the means of grace, that is, that it is really in them, the one who grasps the means of grace in faith certainly has grace.

The Savior expresses this clearly and distinctly when he says to his disciples: "You are now clean because of the Word that I have spoken to you." John 15:3. For when the Word of God comes to us, God himself speaks to us. So when it proclaims grace to us, it is as if God himself came from heaven and said to me: "Don't worry, I am gracious to you, you have my grace. Likewise Paul says that the gospel is the power of God to save — he does not say: to sanctify, to renew, although this is what it is, but: to save — all who believe in it, so that as soon as one believes in the Word, he is also saved; and only by saving us does it also give us the power of new life, not the other way round. Furthermore, the Lord says of Holy Baptism that it saves us when He says: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved", and of Holy Communion that it gives us forgiveness of sins when He says of it: "This is my body which is given for you, this is my blood which is shed for you for the remission of sins." Yes, John says that there are three witnesses of grace in heaven, the Father, the Word (i.e. the Son) and the Holy Spirit [1 John 5:7], but there

are also three witnesses of grace on earth, namely the Spirit (the Word of God), the water (Baptism) and the blood (Holy Communion), and these three are together, or, as the original text says, directed to one thing, namely to bear witness on earth in exactly the same way as the three witnesses in heaven to whom they correspond. By this he means: If anyone would say, yes, if the Holy Trinity itself were to come down from heaven and tell me that I should have grace, I would be at ease; let him know that these three witnesses of grace are and remain in heaven, and yet he can be quite certain and confident of them; for God has also given three witnesses on earth, and these are just as certain, as sure, as comforting as if the triune God himself were to come down from heaven and testify to us of his grace. Indeed, John says beforehand that Jesus himself comes with these three means of grace, 1 John 5:6-8. Thus they are, as it were, the channel that goes out from heaven and reaches down to earth, through which the refreshing water of God's grace flows to us, which we are to collect confidently and cheerfully with the mouth of faith.

Our symbolic books also testify to this; thus the Smalcald Articles teach: "In these matters concerning the outward oral word, it is to be firmly maintained that God gives no one his Spirit or grace without, through, and with the preceding outward Word...." (....) Therefore we should and must insist that God will not deal with us men except through his outward Word and sacrament; but everything that is attributed to the Spirit without such Word and Sacrament is the devil." (Part III, 8, par. 3, 10-11; *Triglotta* p. 495)

Note well what our Church says here! What man wants to have obtained by grace without the Word and the sacraments, that is of the devil, who has inspired it. He therefore has a false God, a false Christ, a false grace. Therefore, if the enthusiasts remained true to their principles until their death, none of them would be saved, for they always teach: if you want grace, you must pray until you feel that it is within you. But because God also has His own among these people, the elect among them, especially in the hour of temptation, even if it is only in the hour of death, throw such self-made things overboard, bring this and that beautiful little saying, and clinging to this rock reef they are still saved in the hour of death. But this is also the only way in which they can be saved; anyone who wants to find grace elsewhere than in the Word and Sacrament will only find a ghost of it, not grace itself.

The Apology writes: "Now it is not possible to deal with God; God cannot be known, sought, or grasped, but only in the Word and through the Word, as Paul says: The gospel is the power of God to all who believe in it." (Art. IV, par. 67; [Triglotta p. 139])

God cannot be grasped except through the Word. Whoever therefore believes that he has grasped

the dear God without the Word, as it were, embraced him with his feelings, has embraced only a cloud and is terribly deceived; indeed, he makes himself God, because he makes for himself a means of grace that God has not made. But only God can make the means of grace, because He alone can give grace.

The Formula of Concord says: "Such righteousness is presented to us by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel and in the sacraments (*offertur*) and is applied, appropriated and accepted by faith." (FC SD 3, 16; [*Triglotta* p. 921])

If we are to take hold of righteousness, it must be somewhere. The enthusiasts now go about in the air seeking it, and yet cannot find it — because they do not seek it where God has placed it, namely in Word and Sacrament.

Furthermore, Luther writes: "If God were to make you pick up a straw or pluck a feather with such a command, order and promise that you should thereby have forgiveness of all sin, his grace and eternal life, should you not accept, love and praise this with all joy and gratitude and therefore hold the same straw and feather higher in holiness and let it be dearer to you than heaven and earth? For however small the straw or feather may be, you will still obtain such good through it that neither heaven nor earth, nor indeed all the angels, can give you. Why are we such shameful people that we do not hold baptismal water, bread and wine, i.e. Christ's body and blood, the oral word, the laying on of a man's hands for forgiveness, as sacred as we would hold the straw or feather? for in them, as we hear and know, God himself wants to work and is to be his water, word, hand, bread and wine, through which he wants to sanctify and save you in Christ, who has acquired such things and given the Holy Spirit from the Father for such a work! Again, if you had gone to St. Jacob's in the same way, or if you had allowed yourself to be murdered by Carthusians, barefoot preachers, preachers (preacher monks) through such austere lives, so that you might be saved, — and God would not have called and ordained such things, what good would it do you? He knows nothing about it, but the devil and you have devised it as special sacraments or priesthoods. And even if you could carry heaven and earth so that you could be saved, all is still lost, and the one who holds up the straw (where it is commanded) would do more than you, even if you could carry ten worlds. Why is that? God wants us to obey His Word, to use His Sacraments, to honor His Church, so He wants to be gracious and gentle enough and more gracious, even more gentle, than we could desire. For it is said in Exodus 2:3: I am your God, you shall have no other gods." (Of the Councils and Churches. 1539. XVI, 2813. f. [*St. L.* 16, 2297; *AE* 41, 172-173])

How true Luther speaks here! If the good God spoke to us

from heaven, we would believe it; but if he speaks to us through the Bible, we do not believe it, because we do not seriously and truly regard it as the Word of God.

What has been said so far shows that our church does not speak merely of signs of grace, but of means of grace. But because there are also those besides us who speak in this way, we must ask further how our church teaches about the means of grace, and whether it also gives all glory to God alone in this. The answer to this is given to us in the 8th point mentioned above.

Let us first consider the teaching of our church on the

**Foundation** of the Means of Grace. (^)

On this she teaches that only God can make means of grace, only he can endow them. Thus it says, for example, in the

Apology of the Augsburg Confession: "Men without a command cannot promise God's grace. Therefore, signs instituted without God's command are not signs of grace." (Ap 13, 3: Of the Sacraments and their proper use. [*Triglotta* 309])

Of course, the word "sign of grace" is not taken here in the Reformed sense, but in the sense that God gives me a sign that He is gracious to me, which is why no man can invent such signs, but rather God must ordain them, while the Reformed call "signs of grace" that by which man shows that he has grace.

The Smalcald Articles teach: "The Word of God shall establish articles of faith, and no one else, not even an angel." (SA II, 2, 15 [].)

For since God alone can establish articles of faith, He alone can establish those acts to which our faith can and should adhere. Therefore writes

John Gerard: "The papists further overthrow Christ's honor in regard to his prophetic office by inventing new sacraments unknown to Christ and the apostles. God and the Mediator Christ alone are responsible for the foundation of sacraments. For just as it is in no man's power to make new articles of faith, so also in no man rests the power by virtue of which he could institute new sacraments. Moreover, it is for him to institute the means of grace whose business it is to give grace. But God alone gives the grace of justification. Therefore it is also his business alone to institute means of grace or sacraments, as Thomas Aquinas correctly concludes. But now the Papists introduce five other sacraments besides the two instituted by Christ in the New Testament: Confirmation, Penance, Matrimony, Ordination of Priests, and

Extreme Unction, of which they have not yet been able to prove from Holy Scripture that they are counted among the number of sacraments by divine institution; so that it remains for them to hold that they were instituted by the Church, that is, by the Roman Pontiff, the head of the Church." (*Disputation, theol. Jenae.1655. I, 52. sq.*)

This distinguishes our church from the papal church. For the latter accepts seven sacraments, and declares its five self-made ones also to be means of grace. These are: 1. Confirmation, which was not instituted by God, but by the Church. 2. extreme unction, which God has not instituted either, namely, not as a means of grace; for although James speaks of ordination, he expressly says that the prayer of faith will help the sick person, James 5:14-15. 3. ordination, which again is not instituted by God. 4. repentance, which is indeed instituted by God, but not as a means by which God gives us his grace, and is therefore not a means of grace; it is rather something that the Holy Spirit must work in us through the means of grace. Finally, 5. even marriage.

But the enthusiasts also make new means of grace. All Methodists declare prayer to be such a means. But how can there be grace in something we do? Prayer is rather an effect, a fruit of the means of grace. As long as these have not given me grace, I cannot yet pray at all, for I do not yet know that God has mercy on me; so long my prayer is only empty chatter, that babbling of which the Savior says that it is proper to the Gentiles. This error of the Methodists is much more atrocious than one can imagine. For because they get sweet religious feelings in answer to their prayer, they think that prayer is a means of grace; they therefore take these sweet feelings for grace. But they confuse grace with the gift of grace, the *χάρις* with the *χάρισμα*, an important difference that Luther explains in more detail in his preface to the Epistle to the Romans. When we Missourians reject this pernicious error in all seriousness, we do so because it is completely unbiblical and therefore also un-Lutheran. But because it is this, we also call it un-Missourian; for we Missourians want to be nothing other than poor Lutherans who have nothing other than the old, which our fathers dug out of the rubble of papism at the time of the Reformation. We do not want to have as many new things as we can scrape off our fingernails. If you do not like this, know that the door is open in all Missourian churches; for we do not want to have anything to do with those who do not give all the glory to God alone; they do not belong to us, and we do not belong to them. But the Methodists go even further: like prayer, they also make their penitential bench, even their *prayer meetings* and *camp meetings*, into means of grace. For if someone complains to one of them: oh, I am certainly not yet converted, and says, for example: I have been to the Lutherans,

there I could not be converted, then I went to the United, even to the Jesuits, who could not bring it about either, then he says to him: Come to our *prayer-meetings*, to our bench of repentance, there it will be all right; we want to pray in such a way that the good Lord will be pleased. Why then do the Methodists do such things other than as means of grace?

Luther speaks about how the pope makes new means of grace as follows:

"When the devil saw that God was building such a holy church, he did not celebrate, and built his chapel there, larger than God's Church is, and did so: He saw that God took external things, such as Baptism, Word, Sacrament, Keys, etc., by which he sanctified his church (as he is always God's monkey and wants to imitate God in all things and make them better), he also took external things before him, which should also sanctify.... So he had the popes and papists consecrate or sanctify water, salt, candles, herbs, bells, images, *Agnus Dei, pallia*, altar, tablets, plates, fingers, hands (who wants to tell it all!), finally sanctifying the monks' caps in such a way that many people died and were buried in them, as if they wanted to be saved by them.... There was no need so small, the devil has founded a sacrament or sanctuary on it, through which one finds advice and help." (Of Councils and Churches. 1539. XVI, 2807. f. [*AE* 41, 167-169])

Luther further writes: "The pope approaches, enchants the water with loose, mere, empty letters, pretends that it is holy water, which washes away sin, chases away the devil and has much virtue; wants to imitate God, like a monkey. ...That he needs the good words of Scripture and God's name to do this is all the worse; God has not commanded him to do it, but has rather harshly forbidden it; it says: You should not abuse God's name; therefore his power is not involved, but are empty, mere, powerless letters. But if sometimes something happens through it, it is not God's work, but the devil's, to strengthen his lies and sorcery (through God's imposition) and to seduce the unbelievers, but to tempt and warn the believers with it." (*On Shem Hamphoras*. 1543. XX, 2546. f. [St. L. 20, 2043-4, AE 61, 448])

Unfortunately, things are much worse now than they were in Luther's time. Every good Catholic now has his holy water in the house, which shows how widespread the pope's sorcery is. Just as he wants to imitate God in everything, so he also thinks here: if God has instituted Baptism, then I have enough water in the world; I can therefore also perform such miracles, and so he enchants water, which is now considered holy water. And this is real sorcery; his servants often produce quite miraculous effects through it. Where the doctor can no longer help, the priest comes and often helps with a few drops of his holy water. But don't be deceived here! Such a supposed

miracle worker does nothing other than what, for example, the miracle worker does in Germany when he promises the rose through all kinds of signs. This is all cursed devil's magic.

Many false Lutherans also teach today that ordination is a sacramental act, especially the orthodox Romanist enthusiast A. F. C. Vilmar, who is regarded in Germany as a great instrument in the hand of God, because he knew how to present his errors with great boldness. Among other things, he trumpeted such foolishness to the world as: if someone is ordained, he can split the devil's head with his eyes, and hell must tremble before him; if, on the other hand, someone does not have the office of ordination, then the Word of God that he brings is an empty shell, there is no spirit, no grace in it.

Let us listen to a few more passages from Zwingli to see how he speaks of the means of grace.

It is true that the Reformed do not like to cite him, because he has come into disrepute; they prefer to refer to Calvin, who knew how to conceal the lie more cleverly; but the latter taught nothing else than the former, and the Reformed do the same to this hour. Among all the Reformed with their sects, the Methodists, Baptists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, the spirit of Zwingli still prevails today; this is the actual source, the way of practicing religion, as the Reformed still have it today.

In 1530 Zwingli had also drawn up a confession, like the Evangelicals, and wanted to present it to the emperor, but the emperor did not accept it because he did not want to have anything to do with the sacramentalists. In this writing he says:

"I believe, yea, I know, that all sacraments, far removed from conferring grace, do not even bring or administer (*dispensent*) the same. In this I may seem to you, most powerful emperor, perhaps too bold. But it remains so. For just as grace is given by the divine Spirit, so this gift is given by the Spirit alone. But the Spirit needs no vehicle, for he himself is the power and bearer through which everything is brought, and does not need to be brought. Nor have we ever read in Holy Scripture that sensual things, such as the sacraments are, certainly bring the Spirit with them.... The grace of the Spirit is therefore not brought by this immersion, not by this drink, not by this anointing.... The sacraments are given as a public testimony of the grace that each one has beforehand.... Baptism therefore does not bring grace, but testifies to the church that the one to whom it is given has already received grace... To speak according to the rule, we see that among all peoples the outward preaching of the apostles and evangelists or bishops has preceded faith, which we owe to the

Spirit alone. For unfortunately we see that many hear the outward preaching of the Gospel but do not believe, which is due to a lack of the Spirit." (*Ad Carolum Fidei ratio*. Lessons, etc., by S. Cyprian. App. p. 19 ff.)

In what an atheistic manner does this man here ridicule the Christian religion; indeed, how does he at the same time turn Baptism into a devil's comedy! since it is of no further use to him than that he who has come to faith should now show this to the Church.

Zwingli expressed himself in a similar way in his treatise "On True and False Religion", which only appeared after his death. It was praised for being the true outgrowth of all Zwingli's writings. Luther was horrified to see that it was indeed so, but full of lies and malice; in it that lying spirit wrote, among other things, that he was looking forward to seeing Theseus and Hercules and Socrates and Numa Pompilius and Christ in heaven. That was the company he was expecting. A Danish court councillor rightly remarked that he did not want to go to heaven because he would have to fear Hercules with the big club. In this writing Zwingli says of absolution:

"It is an impertinence that it has been taught that a man is made certain by the keys, who is only made certain inwardly by faith. You will speak in vain: You are free: for you can no more make him certain by your word than you can make an elephant out of a fly by saying: You are an elephant." (*De vera religione*.)

Here, too, the same mockery of religion as before. At the same time, he here perversely opposes faith to the means of grace, whereas faith must have the means of grace in order to make us certain of grace. It would be like saying: I will not be satisfied by food, but by eating it, whereas without food I can neither eat nor be satisfied. The enthusiasts still speak just as foolishly. They ask how Baptism can save us, since Christ saves us; but they do not consider that Christ saves us through baptism.

Let us now consider further the teaching of our church

## On the **Validity** of the Means of Grace. (^)

Now that we have seen that God has provided the means of grace, the next question arises: Does something now also depend on man that we really have these means of grace? Can anyone say that what God has decreed with regard to the administration of the means of grace has indeed happened, but because the person who administers them is such and such, we do not have them? Never! For if the nature of the one who administers the means of grace could destroy them, God would be dependent on men. If we were to teach, for example:

God has indeed said, take water, pour it on a man and say: I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and he shall be saved, but the man who does this is not of the nature that is desirable, and therefore it is not Baptism — if we were to teach in this way, we would again take away the glory of the dear God in a very terrible way. God's counsel and deed would then again be thwarted, because ultimately everything would be up to man. But this is not the case, which is why our Church does not teach it.

On the contrary, it teaches that if the one who administers a means of grace does only what God has appointed with it, he may be as he wishes, it makes no difference whatsoever with regard to the validity of his action; he is nothing more than God's instrument. However unworthy he may be, however unconverted, however godless, however living in sin, if he does what God instituted at baptism, at the preaching office, at the Lord's Supper, then it is also the true Lord's Supper, the true Gospel, the true absolution, the true baptism. The piety of man does not make the action good, and the godlessness of man does not make the action bad. If we do what God has commanded, He will do what He has promised. He does not allow His work to be thwarted. What is His work is and remains His work. The less is it necessary that one should have the right calling for it, or even that they be ordained for it with great solemnity, or that they combine the right intention, as the papists say, with the administration. None of this is part of the essence of the minister of grace. If we take water and pour it on a person in the name of the triune God, then what God has commanded has been done; then nothing more is needed than that the baptized person believes in Baptism, and he will be saved, and that through Baptism. We take bread and wine and bless it as Christ blessed it, divide it, eat and drink it, and so we do what Christ commanded at the institution of Holy Communion, and so his body and blood are there, and if we believe it, we also receive the fruit of it: forgiveness of sin, participation in the redemption of Jesus Christ. If a preacher is completely dead in sins, and he absolves someone of all his sins, not with the addition: if you are pious, but in the name of Christ by virtue of the ministry of the gospel, then true absolution is there. For what Christ has commanded is done; therefore the one who is absolved also receives forgiveness of sins, as surely as there is a God in heaven. Even if the preacher is up to his ears in sin, even if he is a wretch, God will not allow this to destroy what he has instituted. It is just the same here as in the realm of nature. If a man (Luther gives this example) fishes in another man's pond, he is a thief; but if he fishes well,

this rascal catches fish just as well as the honest man. So it is in all relationships in the realm of nature. If what God has ordered happens, then what God has allowed to follow such orders also follows; for God remains God, he does not allow his things to be destroyed by any creature. Of course, if we do it differently from what God has ordered, then it is nothing; then it is our own doing, and we should not be surprised if what God has promised does not happen; for he has not promised grace to our own action, but to the action he has instituted. For example, if I take oil and baptize someone with it, it is not baptism, because I am not doing what Christ commanded. However, if I take bread and wine and bless it according to Christ's institution, but do it thoughtlessly, without any devotion, this does not change the matter at all. What Christ commanded is done, and what Christ promised is done.

If it were the case, as the papists say, that the validity of the means of grace depended on the intention of the one who administers them, we would be miserable people. Imagine for a moment that absolution only really takes place, that baptism, the Lord's Supper and the preaching of the Gospel are only valid if the preacher is converted: who among us would then know whether he had been baptized, whether he had ever received the body and blood of the Lord in his life, whether he had ever been absolved, whether he had ever heard the true Word of God that works faith? No one would know. For who among us will swear that a pastor is converted? Can we see into his heart? Even if Peter were to come and absolve us, we could not swear to it, for the devil could then say to us: but that time he fell, and all our comfort would be gone. If the enthusiasts mock us, because we believe that even an ungodly preacher can absolve us, we are happy; but it is precisely those miserable people who build the consolation of conscience on nothing but sand and wind, by making the listener's own conversion dependent on the converted state of the preacher; for they have enough men among them who were at first considered the greatest saints, and afterwards became manifestly the greatest scoundrels, as recently that Methodist preacher Pearsall Smith, who was praised far and wide in Germany, that he himself could boast that all Europe lay at his feet, proved to be a gross sinner against the sixth commandment. In their opinion, they must conclude in such cases: that man was unconverted when I came to conversion, so I must still be unconverted.

The modern Lutherans also abolish the validity of the means of grace with their doctrine of ordination. They do not deny it, even if the preacher is unconverted, but they say that he must be properly called. But how can I know this in most cases? A preacher must know it for the salvation of his soul: but I can

never know whether he has not come into the ministry by all sorts of crooked ways. Especially when they say that he must be properly ordained, especially according to their doctrine of ordination, they nullify all validity of the means of grace. For these papistic [*papenzenden*] Lutherans teach that ordination is an act which only a preacher can perform, no other man in the world, and only such a preacher who has himself received this ordination. It would therefore follow that the apostles must have received ordination from Christ, and they must have been the first to ordain. From them, ordination has then been passed down through the centuries to the present day. If someone has not been ordained by a preacher whose own ordination reaches back in its origin to the apostles, then any ordination that he has performed is invalid. But according to this doctrine, who among us could know whether he has received ordination? for who can date it back to the apostles? Who, then, could prove that, as it were, the electric matter flowed from the hand of the ordinator into his head through the laying on of hands? Just as a telegraph wire does not propagate the electric current as soon as it is cut, and all its other parts receive nothing of the current from the moment of the cut, so, according to that doctrine, all those who have been ordained from the point where the ordination current has not been carried away by breaking the chain receive no ordination. Truly a shameful, abominable doctrine, this doctrine of ordination, for by it the means of grace are made quite uncertain. No one who has this doctrine and goes to church can know whether the preacher is really speaking God's Word, is properly ordained, is baptizing properly, is giving Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper; he does not know whether the preacher is properly ordained. That is why the Episcopal Church is such a dangerous sect, because it says that if the preacher is not ordained by the bishop, then he has no authority, all his work is the work of men, he does not offer the means of grace. In happy inconsistency, however, they teach that a peasant can also administer baptism. Oh, how terribly God's honor is attacked by this doctrine of ordination, for God must say: "It is true that what I have commanded is done, but because men have not helped me with their holiness and worthiness, I have no means of grace; it depends on men, not on me, whether they are there. Let us therefore praise God that by His grace we are in a church that does not want to know anything about this blasphemous teaching, but rather teaches the full validity of the means of grace. Thus it says in

Large Catechism: "Although a man takes or gives the sacrament, he takes the true sacrament, that is, Christ's body and blood, just as much as he does it in the most worthy manner. For it is not founded on human holiness, but on God's

Word; and as no saint on earth, nay, no angel in heaven, can make the bread and wine into Christ's body and blood, so neither can anyone else, though it be abused. For it is not because of the person or unbelief that the Word is false, in that it is a sacrament and instituted; for he does not say: If you believe or are worthy, you have my body and blood, but: Take, eat and drink, this is my body and blood; again: Do these things (namely, that I now do, institute, give to you and call to take); that is to say, God grant that you are unworthy or worthy, you have here his body and blood by virtue of these words that come with the bread and wine. Only remember and keep this well, for on these words stands all our foundation, protection and defense against all errors and deceptions that have ever come or may yet come." (“The Sacrament of the Altar,” par. 16-19 [*Triglotta* p. 757])

As little as even an angel in heaven can make the body and blood of Christ, so little can he make Christ's body and blood not be in the Lord's Supper, because Christ instituted it. The validity of the means of grace is not based on the holiness of men or angels, but on God's Word. But how comforting this is! For thus the precious children of God are not abandoned to shameful, false prophets and ungodly knaves. God Himself has faithfully ensured that they are not deceived by basing the means of grace on the Word. Thus they have a clear testimony as to whether the preacher brings them the means of grace or not: namely, the words of institution, and now they pay attention to whether the preacher follows it exactly. If they see that he does what Christ has commanded, they are satisfied, for then they know that they also receive the means of grace. After all, they do not actually receive Baptism, Absolution and Holy Communion from him, but from their Lord Jesus, only through the preacher as the Lord's instrument. Even if he is a hypocrite, a knave, they do not care in this respect; he cannot change the means of grace through his hypocrisy and villainy, he cannot take out the core, and therefore they do not need to look into his heart, they only look at his hand and keep to the Lord's saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore, whatever they tell you to observe, observe and do; but do not do according to their works" Matt. 23:2-3. This passage shows that the validity of the means of grace is not at all dependent on the worthiness or unworthiness of the one who administers them, while those who deny this will be judged by the Word of the Lord: "Cursed is the man who trusts in men and takes flesh for his arm.” Jer. 17:5.

Furthermore, the Formula of Concord states: "The erroneous articles of the

Schwenkfeldians: ... 8. that the minister of the churches can teach other people nothing useful or administer right, true sacraments, who is not also for his own person truly regenerated, born again, righteous and pious." (FC Ep 12, 27; *Triglotta* p. 843)

What the Methodists and sects now teach on this point is therefore nothing other than the renewed doctrine of the Schwenkfeldians and has already been rejected by our Church.

As the papists make the validity of the means of grace dependent on the intention of the one who administers them, the Council of Trent teaches in the following words: "If anyone says that when the sacraments are administered and communicated, the intention to do at least what the Church does is not required, let him be accursed." (Session 7. Can. 11.)

By this doctrine the papists rob their own of all consolation by drawing them away from God's Word and towards human sanctity. From this we see again what we have already seen in all the previous points! A doctrine that gives all glory to God also gives all comfort to men, and vice versa: a doctrine that takes glory away from God also robs men of all comfort. Therefore, let us continue to give all glory to God alone in all our teachings; we ourselves have only the richest blessing from it.

If, by the way, we teach that the validity of the means of grace is quite independent of the holiness or unholiness of the one who administers them, this is not to say, of course, that it makes no difference to the congregation whether it has a pious or an ungodly preacher; for of course a preacher can prevent many from accepting the faith through ungodly behavior. It would be a great impertinence for a congregation to choose a preacher whom it does not firmly believe to be a converted Christian. For if the preacher is not a true Christian, how can the congregation believe that he will always do what God has commanded? Especially when temptation comes, he will soon prove to be a hireling; also, even if he does not bring forward any obvious heresies, he will certainly pervert God's Word in such a way that no one can take anything right from his sermons, for how can a blind man show the way to a blind man? An unconverted preacher will never administer his ministry properly. It is true that the ministry of the gospel remains valid in those things where he does it rightly; but he will certainly not rightly divide Law and Gospel, since he himself does not recognize temptation from experience, nor will he give right comfort to those who are troubled, and the like.

Furthermore, Luther writes: "If I wanted to plow into the water and sow grain, or see fish in the air..., nothing would come of it, of course; for God has not ordered it that way and does not want it that way. But if

I sow, with wickedness, in another man's field, or fish in another man's pond, though such sowing and fishing be unlawful, yet corn would grow in the field, and yet I would catch fish in the pond. Therefore I have said that papists, if they keep the order of Christ, truly have in the sacrament the real and true body and blood of Christ. If it is one, it is the body of Christ; if it is both, it is both body and blood, according to the words and order of Christ. But if they sell it (without violating the order of Christ), give it, abuse it or give and take it unworthily, this neither adds nor takes anything away from the sacrament. God remains God, even in hell; Christ remains pious, even under his crucifiers; a coin remains a coin even in the hands of thieves and robbers, if it is only a true coin, struck according to the coin of the king or prince. But if it is a false coin, struck against the king's order, it will never become a true coin, even if the king himself or the angel Gabriel wanted to buy it. Therefore in my booklet I have not challenged the sin against the sacrament or abuse, but the wrong order of the Mass against the order of Christ." (XIX, 1547. f. [sic XIX 1574 f.; St. L. 19, 1291; AE 38, 225-226])

Even if one commits the most shameful abuse of Holy Communion, for example, if one sells it for high prices, as the Roman clergy do, this does not invalidate Holy Communion. God remains God even in hell, Christ remains pious even under his crucifiers. Or if a despiser of the preaching ministry administers baptism, even administers the Lord's Supper, and he is not called, he sins terribly against the sanctuary of the Lord; but Baptism and the Lord's Supper still are.

Luther also writes: "The holy place or church teaches that neither priests nor Christians make a single sacrament, nor does the holy Christian church itself. ... For it is not called a Baptism because I baptize or do the work, even if I were holier than St. John or an angel. Rather, my baptism is called a Baptism because Christ's Word, command and institution have so ordered it that water and His Word should be one Baptism. Such His ordinance (I say) and not our doing or *opus operatum* makes Baptism; but our doing alone suffices and gives such baptism, ordained and made by Christ's command and institution. Therefore He is and remains the only true eternal baptizer. … So also that bread and wine become Christ's body and blood is not the fault of our doing, speaking and working, much less of Christ or consecration, but it is the fault of Christ's order, command and institution; the same has commanded, as St. Paul says, 1 Cor. 11:23: When we come together and speak his words concerning bread and wine, it shall be his body and blood;

that we do no more here than pass and give bread and wine with his words, according to his command and institution. And such his command and institution enables and creates that we do not offer and receive bread and wine badly, but his body and blood, as his words are: 'This is my body, this is my blood'; that not our work or speech, but the command and order of Christ makes the bread the body and the wine the blood, from the beginning of the first supper to the end of the world, and is given daily through our service or ministry. For we hear these words: 'This is my body', not as spoken in the person of the minister or servant, but as from Christ's own mouth, who is present and says to us: 'Take and eat, this is my body'. ... For this we must believe and be sure, that Baptism is not ours, but Christ's; that the ministry of preaching is not ours, but Christ's; that the sacrament is not ours, but Christ's; that the keys or remission and retention of sins is not ours, but Christ's. — But if we change and improve it, it is nothing, and Christ is no longer there, nor his order; and I will not say, as the papists do, that no angel nor Mary can walk, etc., but I say: Even if the devil himself were to come (if he were so pious that he would or could do so), but I presume that I would find out afterwards that the devil had crept into the office in this way, or had allowed himself to be called to the pastoral office in the form of a man and publicly preached the Gospel in the church, baptized, said Mass, absolved, and exercised and administered such office and sacrament as a pastor according to the command and order of Christ: we must nevertheless confess that the sacraments were right, that we received the right baptism, heard the right gospel, received the right absolution, and took the right sacrament of the body and blood of Christ. For our faith and sacrament must not stand on the person, whether he be pious or wicked, consecrated or unconsecrated, called or insinuated, the devil or his mother; but on Christ, on his word, on his office, on his command and order. Where these go, there it must go and stand right, the person be who or how he will or can. ... It is the case in creatures that our actions and works accomplish nothing, but only God's command and order. As when we plow, sow, and plant, we do our work which is commanded us, Gen. 3:19; but such our work does not bring forth a little grain, but the command and order of God, when he says to the earth, Gen. 1:11: Let the earth bring forth grass, herbs, and all kinds of trees; as also St. Paul says, 1 Cor. 3:7: 'He who plants is nothing, he who plants is nothing, but God who gives the increase. Now if a devil or a man, a rogue or a pious man, does such a work; if he plants, sows, or waters, the order and command of God still prevails,

and the earth bears fruit. ... So it is here with the sacraments. We do water and the word together, as he commands us; but such our doing does not make it baptism, but Christ's command and order. We take bread and wine according to his commandment at the word of Christ, but our doing so does not make it Christ's order. Now if the devil or his member kept the order of Christ and acted according to it, it would still be the right Baptism and sacrament. . And that I answer once to the question which I did above, namely, how one should" (in his judgment) "hold oneself against the pastor in the papacy, because they are not ordained otherwise than by angular bishops to the angular mass. Here thou shalt do so: thou shalt neither respect nor regard his chrism and angular consecration, which is certainly nothing to the churches, nor is it of any use or service to thee; but look to the fact that he has the parish office within, which is not his, but Christ's office. Do not be mistaken, either, whether he has been duly called, or has bought his way in, or has forced his way in; how he came in, over the head or over the foot, whether he is Judas or St. Peter: let nothing lie with you; separate the office from the person, and the sanctity from the abomination. Well, he is a pastor, and Christ has thus received his holy, dear pastorate in the papacy under the abomination. If he now preaches the text of the Gospel purely, then say: This is the sanctity of Christ. If he preaches other doctrine contrary to the gospel, then say: This is the abomination of the devil, which destroys the word. If he baptizes and keeps the ordinance of Christ (even if he does not have the right mind for baptism), then say: Baptism is right for the sake of Christ's ordinance, not for the sake of the pastor or his work. If he absolves you in confession or in public, or forgives sin, though there is not a papist in the world who would rightly understand what forgiveness of sins is; they do not know (as all their books show) whether they are forgiving guilt or chastisement, do not touch yourself. If he keeps the word and the way, and absolves you in Christ's name, then say: "My Lord Christ himself gives me this holy, comforting absolution through his keys, which he has given to the church. If he imposes penance on you besides, as if you should do enough for your sin, then think: Behold, this is the abomination that wants to destroy my absolution, as if Christ should sell me his grace for my merit. . When he says Mass, diligently note this difference: as far as he keeps the order and institution of Christ, and also administers and gives the sacrament to others, know that Christ's body and blood are certainly there for the sake of Christ's order and not for the sake of the pastor's work and holiness. But if he does not keep the order and mind of Christ, but changes and perverts it, it is not necessary for you to believe that it is Christ's body and blood; indeed, you should not believe, just as it is said above about other private masses." (XIX, 1547-56; St. L. 19, 1269-1276; AE 38, 198-205)

38 [1876 Western District essay by Walther]

John 4:1-2 says that Christ made more disciples and baptized more than John, even though Jesus did not baptize, but his disciples did. Thus the Holy Spirit testifies that the baptism was not the disciples' baptism, but Christ's Baptism. Jesus alone is therefore the Baptizer. From this we see again that the preachers do nothing at all to make the means of grace valid, but the Lord alone makes them valid through the Word. Therefore, if even the devil himself preached in a pulpit, and he preached God's word, the word he preached would still be true and powerful; and whoever hears this word in faith also receives God's power that is in it. If, for example, the whole world wanted to work itself to death to extract an ear of corn from a grain and did not want to keep God's order and not put the grain in the ground, then all the chemists, who have researched the laws of nature quite thoroughly, would not bring forth a single grain with all their skills. On the other hand, if you put it in the ground, the stalk will come out, even if it is the biggest rascal who sows it. It is the same here. If one follows God's order with regard to the means of grace, they are there; whoever wants to do the deed may do it. If one does not, then they are not there; again, whoever wishes may perform the act. If, for example, to speak literally, in the Old Testament someone had spoken the words of institution of Holy Communion over bread and wine, it would still not have been Communion, because it was not yet ordained at that time; if, on the other hand, a Roman priest absolved me, I should know that if he absolved me not on my good works or on the merits of the saints, but as we do in the Lutheran Church, it would be a good, comforting absolution. Pastor Grabau teaches about ordination in exactly the same way as the modern Lutherans described above. Nevertheless, one of our pastors [Walther] once took heart from the divine word of absolution he received from him during a sermon he heard, embracing it with joyful faith, while at the same time, also following the Word of God, he did not accept the accompanying rejection [by Grabau].

However, it should be borne in mind that the means of grace only exist where God's Word is real. For if the so-called free Protestants also use the formula at their baptism: "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit", this is not the Word of God, for they do not have it at all, since they do not believe in the triune God. For the essence of the word is not the sound, but the concept that I want to designate with the sound. For example, it doesn't matter whether I write or speak a word, the word is there in both cases. Thus the sound does not make the word a word, but the meaning that I give the word. We Germans, for example, say "skin", and thus understand what is on our fletsche; the Latin says "*haud*" and thus negates a thing. The German

says "Laus", and understands by it something very unappetizing; the Latin says "*laus*" and understands by it something very pleasant, namely praise. So the sound does not do it, but it depends on what is expressed by the sound among a certain people. Indeed, even the different dialects of one and the same language often denote very different things with one and the same sound. In High German, for example, the word "Dirne" is used to describe a lascivious woman, whereas in Low German, all brave girls are Dirnen according to the sound of the word. If you call a man a "Kerl" in High German, he takes this term very badly; in Low German, a "Kerl" is a very respectable person. It follows from this: If I come to a Reformed man, especially to a Zwinglian, he also says, Christ speaks: This is my body, this is my blood; but he immediately adds, that is: This means my body, my blood. Thus they also have the sound, but they attach to it an entirely different meaning than is usually connected with it; thus they do not have the thing, namely the body and blood of Christ, for they do not have the word which makes the element a sacrament. Or I come to a "free man", as these people like to call themselves, who has a free congregation. I say to him, 'You have no baptism at all,' and he replies, 'Oh, I do just as you do. If I say to him, 'So you believe in the triune God?' he replies, 'That doesn't occur to us. By "Father" we mean the Great Spirit, by "Son" the famous Rabbi Jesus of Nazareth, by "Holy Spirit" the spirit of the age, and we baptize our children in these three. So you see, for them the words Father, Son and Holy Spirit have taken on a completely different meaning. They have retained the sound, but they have given it a completely different meaning, and this has become valid among them.

If, on the other hand, I were now to enter the Missouri Synod, and I had a child to baptize, I would quite calmly have it baptized by one of their pastors, and be quite sure that the child would be properly baptized, notwithstanding that the preacher might be a hypocrite and secret Arian — for such people might also be secretly among us, like Judas among the apostles. But if I did not know it, and such a person had never betrayed the fact that he believed nothing, it would be all the same to me with regard to the baptism of my child. I hold to the fact that the Missouri Synod professes faith in the triune God; therefore the words: Father, Son, Holy Spirit also have this meaning with them, so I also know that my child has been baptized correctly. But if a godless clergyman does not believe in the triune God, but in his big beard and the dollar, for example, and baptizes children for money, as people want it, but uses our baptismal formula in order to keep even those who are superstitious in his eyes, who have the Christian faith, he confesses every

Sunday that he does not believe in the triune God, but calls such a belief an error of the dark ages, such a one does not baptize the children, but performs an act which has nothing in common with Baptism, only that he gives it the appearance of baptism. So what a church fellowship teaches and publicly confesses, that is what it gives; and likewise its preacher can give nothing but what it has.

Therefore, if an orthodox believer were to say: I can also take Holy Communion with the Reformed, because the Word does it, and they also have it, he would be very much mistaken. Rather, because they deny the real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, they take the actual meaning out of the word of Christ, so they have the sound, but not the word: thus they do not have Christ's body and blood, but only bread and wine. Provided that the preacher publicly declares the word "this is" as "this means" — for that is what matters — he gives only bread and wine and nothing more. Indeed, even if a preacher of the Missouri Synod were now, God forbid, to fall away and publicly teach that the body and blood of Christ are not in the Lord's Supper, and the congregation were to accept this, he would not give the body and blood of Christ, even if some orthodox believers were there, because they should separate themselves from the false prophets. At the time of rationalism, many pastors did not believe in the triune God, but they concealed their unbelief, and the congregations held fast to the true faith, which is why they also had baptism, because the word of the triune God was with them. If, on the other hand, the pastors preached that they did not believe in the triune God and the congregations agreed with this unbelief, there was no baptism. If such a baptized person believed that he was baptized, he was very much mistaken, he was not baptized. But praise God that we have three means of grace, namely, in addition to Baptism, the Word and the Lord's Supper! These two means of grace give us forgiveness of sins, life and salvation just as much as Baptism; thus the lack of baptism does not prevent the true believer from his salvation, as the Church always teaches on the basis of divine word that it is not the lack of baptism but the contempt of baptism that condemns. The Lord expressly says: he who does not believe will be condemned, not: he who does not believe and is not baptized. For example, if I cannot go to Holy Communion because there is no orthodox preacher, and I believe, it is just as good as if I had received it, as Augustine also says: *crede, et manducasti*. [Believe, and you have eaten."] It is true that I have not partaken of Christ's body and blood; but the good of grace that is in the Lord's Supper can be given to me by the good Lord even without the Lord's Supper, and I have this good of grace in the Word just as well as in the Lord's Supper. It is therefore not for nothing that Paul says that Christ cleansed his Church through the water bath by the Word, Ephesians 5:26, by which he means

that the Lord Jesus cleansed his Church through Baptism. Now someone might ask: how can Christians be cleansed in their souls by water? Then he says: Baptism can do this for the sake of the Word. The Word of the living God is the cause that water Baptism cleanses me, sanctifies me, makes me blessed, as the original text also shows.

Note also that the Zwinglians have, if not the Lord's Supper, at least Baptism. It is true that they also teach wrongly about Baptism, but not with regard to its essence, but with regard to its effects. If they were to teach falsely about baptism with regard to its essence, Baptism would certainly not be with them; but because they do not do this, they also have Baptism. For Baptism is not merely the sprinkling of water with all kinds of holy words in a certain solemnity, but the Savior commands us to sprinkle water in the name, i.e. on behalf of, invoking and at the command of the triune God. Whoever says publicly that he does not believe in the triune God is not doing what Christ commanded. He not only denies that Baptism saves, but he denies what it consists of. For Baptism consists in applying the water in such a way that it is done in the name of the triune God. The Zwinglian does not deny that this happens, so he does not deny the essence of Baptism, he only denies its fruit. He therefore also baptizes in the name of the triune God and therefore also has Baptism. It is different with the Lord's Supper. The Lord Jesus said that it is a meal in which his body and blood are distributed with bread and wine. But the Zwinglian does not want to hold such a meal at all; he calls it superstition. He therefore denies not only the fruit of it, that we receive forgiveness of sins through it, but the essence of it, and this with such full awareness that he even says that it is quite impossible that Christ's body and blood could be in the Lord's Supper, for He is seated at the right hand of God, and according to their doctrine is as it were shut up until the last day. O fools! According to their doctrine, the almighty God cannot leave heaven, and yet they think that poor man can swing himself into heaven by faith! So it is evident: they do not have Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper. Whoever sought this from the Reformed would be like a person who is invited by another as a guest, but sees nothing before him but a laid table, no bread, no meat, no wine, not even a glass of water, and who, when asked where the food was, receives the answer: yes, the laid table should only remind him of bread and meat and wine and the like. This is precisely how the Zwinglians teach that the bread and wine offered are merely symbols that should only remind us of Christ's body and blood. Therefore, just as little as that guest received something to eat, so little do the guests at such a communion receive something of Christ's body and blood.

42 [1876 Western District essay by Walther]

Let us now go on to consider the teaching of our church on the

**Power** of the Means of Grace. (^)

This raises the further question: Does the power of the means of grace perhaps depend on man? Not so either. For he who teaches this again takes away God's honor in the doctrine of the means of grace, because it would follow that it is actually man, his constitution, which makes the means of grace such; it is therefore man for whose sake the means of grace are contained. But this is not what our Church teaches; here too it gives all the glory to God alone, while all other communions do the opposite.

For the Reformed do not merely say of the Lord's Supper that it signifies the body and blood of Christ, nor merely of Baptism that it signifies only regeneration, but they also make the word of the gospel a mere significance. They say that when the gospel is brought, it is really nothing more than that: God reveals to man what he [man] must do if he wants to attain to grace. For the Reformed, the Gospel is nothing more than an instruction, a lesson. It proclaims that Christ died for mankind, that he fulfilled the law for us, but, they say, if you want to obtain this grace, see how you get it! In the end it depends on you to be saved. But that is a godless teaching. The matter is rather like this:

When a mob of rebels is condemned to death and the king stands, that they were all deceived, decides to pardon them, and even draws up a document with his seal and signature, which says: all the rebels are to be pardoned, and he sends someone to the city where the rebels are, with the order that he should announce this to them, they can be quite happy, their rebellion should have no consequences for them at all; the king has pardoned them, here is the document—: must the rebels now first do anything for this to be a document of pardon? No, it is already present; they should not first make grace to be present by their behavior, it is already present; they should only believe what has been preached to them so that they may enjoy grace. Likewise, every preaching of the Gospel is an absolution that God Himself gives to everyone who hears the preaching of the Gospel. Nothing is demanded of man in order for it to be a pardon; it is already there. Unbelief is not merely the impediment that man cannot regard it as a pardon, but it is a refusal to regard the gospel for what it already is. That is why there is no more comforting teaching than this. Whoever grasps this doctrine correctly can never, in any trial, not even in mortal distress, be without consolation; it is such an exceedingly great consolation that even in the greatest distress all poor

sinners are helped by God. It is only so terrible that it is presented so little because the preachers believe and confess it so little, and not only the Reformed, but also many Lutherans; for even in the Lutheran Church there are very many preachers who are basically Reformed.

For this is the main difference between the Reformed and the Lutherans, that the former, according to their confession, do not believe in a perfect salvation that has taken place, so that man has nothing else to do but to accept the message of it in cheerful faith. The Lutheran Church, on the other hand, teaches that man should do nothing at all to be redeemed, for he is already redeemed, he already has forgiveness of sins, God is already gracious to him, and now man should accept all these things: God's grace, forgiveness of sins, eternal life, which are already present. So no matter how unbelieving a listener may be or how godless he may live, if the preacher absolves him, he really hands him the forgiveness of sin, he gives it to him, and if he goes away without forgiveness of sin, it is not because it was not given to him, but because the preacher gave it to him, but he did not accept it. The fact that I am a believer and go to confession does not mean that the forgiveness of sin is now there, but only that the forgiveness of sin, which is already there, now also benefits me. The good of grace is not produced by this, but only by the fact that the good of grace is not offered to me in vain. For there is that which Christ already acquired for us eighteen hundred years ago with his bloody sweat and shedding of all his blood. Grace is already in the Word, in Absolution, in Baptism, in the Lord's Supper; faith does not bring it in, but faith takes it out. But this is precisely what is lacking, as Luther says among other things:

"Surely the two pieces must come together, as Christ hangs them one on the other, saying, 'He that believeth shall be saved.' Of course there is no lack or defect in the one thing: 'He shall be saved'; for this is given and bestowed in the Word or Gospel." [St. L. 11, 968; not in AE.]

Here Luther confirms what he has just said. So it is not only taught in the Gospel: you must do this and that in order to be saved, but grace is given to everyone with the Gospel. This is also in the nature of things. Since man is to be saved by faith, it follows that he must believe what is true, not that it may become true. For that would be a very strange thing: if you believe it, it is true, but if you do not believe it, it is not true; that would be sheer foolishness. Indeed, if I wanted to take it in faith without it being given to me, I would be a thief; then the good Lord would say to me: How can you be so impudent as to

steal my grace, this great good that opens heaven and saves me from hell and eternal damnation? But there is not a single sinner in the world to whom forgiveness of sin has not already been given through the gospel; it was also given to Judas, Ahithophel, Cain, Manasseh, even before he repented.

Luther continues: "which is God's unchanging truth;" —

Consider this carefully! For many think they believe the gospel to be the truth, and yet they do not. Indeed, we must all accuse ourselves of believing the gospel to be nothing but a lie every day. For taking the gospel for truth means nothing other than believing that this message is not a lie, which says: Man, you are redeemed, you have received salvation from God, righteousness has been given to you. But then a person, even a Christian in temptation, says: I cannot believe this. But what are we doing other than making a lie of the gospel? To every man, whoever he may be, even to the most wicked mocker of religion, I can say: all the gates of heaven have long been opened to you, all grace and forgiveness have long been given to you. That is the gospel. But who believes it?

That is why Luther adds: "but there is still much lacking in our faith that we cannot grasp and hold this firmly enough." (Walch XI, 1311.)

And further down he writes: "Of course there is no doubt or lack about these words: 'He that believeth shall be saved,' etc., that hell is already closed, heaven open, eternal life and joy; but there is still a lack in the first part: that you are not yet the man who is called: *Qui credit*, a believer, or that you are still weak." (Ibid. 1327; St. L. 11, 980)

So you need not even look to see if you are going to heaven; it has long since been opened wide for all the fallen, you just haven't gone in yet. Yes, if you had eyes, you would see the opposite with regard to hell. You would say: It is locked so tightly that I cannot enter. That, yes, that is what Christ has done; you must force your way into hell. If, of course, you say, well, I do want to go in, then go to hell! No sin condemns, but only unbelief, for there is no sin, however terrible, that is not balanced by the precious ransom of the blood of Christ. God has already paid for all our sins, down to the last penny. But we shameful people do not believe it. God sends twelve apostles into the world, and they must cry out everywhere: The Son of God has blotted out sin, has unlocked heaven, has purchased eternal life for us, now believe it! but no one wants to believe it, but they say: yes, if I were pious, if I were such and such, if my repentance were right, if I had first reformed, I would believe it. But, you wretched man, you will never receive it! If you

want to become better, you must first accept grace, for that alone gives the Holy Spirit, who makes us better. Unfortunately, righteous faith is seldom such that one completely disregards his works, his repentance, his contrition, and thinks, I have the gospel and I believe it, so no devil can rob my soul, for God has asked nothing of me, the message of the twelve apostles has also reached me, I accept it, I take comfort in it in life and in death. O blessed is he who has come to this realization! But only the Holy Spirit can work this, without Him we think it is nothing but a fable. It would be far too comforting, our blind reason thinks, if the way to salvation were made so easy for us; I must first become more pious, whereas true conversion only takes place after a person has begun to believe this most comforting, sweetest, truly heavenly message of grace.

Therefore Luther says: "Absolution is truly certain and eternal, even if you do not believe in it, just as the sun truly shines and shines in the sky and is the true sun, even if you are not standing in it or if you are crowned in a cellar so that you cannot see it; which is not the sun's fault, but yours. . . So ... absolution is quite certain. If you do not believe in absolution, it is not its fault, but yours. Why do you not accept it?" (Erlanger A. Vol. XLIV, 167. f.)

Most Lutherans are true papists in this respect, namely as far as absolution is concerned; and this is true even among the best Lutherans. They think that the preacher sits in confession as a judge; he examines the penitents and inquires how they actually stand; and according to his judgment he either gives them forgiveness of sin or does not give it to them. But this is a very shameful opinion. It is true that the preacher should not give the sanctuary to the dogs, nor cast pearls before swine; but this does not mean that his office in confession actually consists in examining people to see whether they are worthy or unworthy of absolution; rather, he sits in the confessional like a letter carrier. Such a person simply brings the letter he has to order and does nothing about it. Whatever the contents of the letter may be, it is all the same to him; he is only concerned, if he is a righteous man, that the letter reaches my hands correctly. Preachers should be just such righteous letter carriers. For they bring the letter of God, which proclaims grace to us, and now they are only concerned that we receive the letter correctly, namely that we accept grace in faith. But a preacher does not have the confessor before him to examine whether he can grant him forgiveness of sins or not. If this were taught, every penitent would think: "Why do I need to go to confession? The pastor cannot look into my heart. I must know better myself whether I can comfort myself with

absolution or not. But that is not true. The preacher does not need to look into your heart at all; he absolves you, and thus, as often as he does so, he gives you every time the whole treasure of God's grace, as sure as God is in heaven, and you should not think: yes, may I also take comfort in this? may I also accept grace, since my improvement is still so bad, since my repentance is so small, since even my confession is not as pure as it should be? Oh, my dear, you must not only accept it, you should accept it. Cursed are you if you do not accept it, for then you make God's Word and the gospel nothing but a lie. God has not said: if you are such and such, then you shall have absolution, oh no! he gives forgiveness of sin without any conditions. No one may say, I have come out of confession without comfort, for I am too wretched a person; when you are in confession, you should rather feel as if the good Lord himself were standing there and telling you that your sins are forgiven, you should not doubt at all that you have mercy. If, for example, I have seriously offended someone, and he says to me, I will forgive you, I am reconciled with you, I will never think of the offense again, and I say, I do not believe that you honestly mean it, would that not be a new, gross offense? Such a new and terrible offense is committed against God by those who go to confession and do not believe that they have been forgiven of their sins. They cannot excuse themselves by saying: "My repentance is too bad." Who can call them to rely on their repentance, on their confession, on their amendment for the forgiveness of sins? They should rely on the gospel. If you do not accept it, then you are simply rejecting it and making God a liar, just as John says that whoever does not believe the gospel makes God a liar.

While so many Lutherans now teach falsely about the power of the means of grace, especially about absolution, how can we thank God enough that He has given us the jewel of the pure doctrine just explained? Yes, how God has blessed us Lutherans above all other churches on earth, for where else can this doctrine be found? And it is precisely this doctrine that wins the hearts of the people; it is also the doctrine that has spread our Synod so widely, therefore let us watch over it anxiously, for it makes the Christian a Christian, it gathers our congregations, it preserves our youth, which is in such great danger. Truly, it is worth a thousand synodal journeys to hear such glorious things among us. Just think: according to God's Word, absolution is not merely an announcement, but the granting of forgiveness of sins. Whoever believes this becomes a pardoned child of God. The moment he accepts absolution, all his sins are taken away from him. As comforting as this teaching is, it is also important. If we had all other doctrines pure,

and not this one, we would soon lose all doctrines again, for it shows most clearly that we are justified and saved by faith alone, without any merit. That is why Satan rages against this very truth — for all sects and enthusiasts rage against it, and most of all against this doctrine — because he knows full well what comfort he is robbing us of with it, and especially how he is thereby taking away the glory of God. For how could God be more dishonored than by saying: God has a happy message proclaimed to the world, but the vast majority are not allowed to believe it? Isn't that terrible? But it is just the opposite: everyone should believe it, and the vast majority cannot believe it because they want to remain stuck in the dung and filth of sin; for what do the worldlings, the servants of sin, ask for the forgiveness of sin? If I had money, they say, what do I ask about what the priests are telling me! One cannot believe until one knows that I am a lost and damned sinner, I need grace. But when the gospel comes, then I should not only believe, then I can also believe, because the gospel works faith in all who do not willfully resist it. But of course, that is no doubt why it often happens that the gospel is preached seemingly correctly and yet people do not come to believe because we do not preach the power of the means of grace correctly. We should speak to people like this: When I tell you that God is reconciled to you, you should not shake your heads and think: I am a good-for-nothing; no, you should say: Amen, that is certainly true. Nothing needs to be done by you, nothing needs to be suffered by you, it is all ready; only one thing is missing: you must believe it. Now you should not think: yes, may I believe? no! you should believe, God wants it that way. Paul says that he preaches to establish the obedience of faith. [Romans 1:5; 16:26] This is an unspeakably comforting word, for he says that God has commanded the whole world to believe. Therefore he who does not believe does not do what God has commanded him. This is why the Savior says of the Holy Spirit that he punishes the world for sin, and not for the sin of killing one another, stealing from one another, fornicating, etc., but for not believing in him. This is the great and terrible sin that closes heaven and opens hell. It is a great difference whether I say: not all men may believe, or whether I say: not all men can believe; the latter is true, the former is not. All men must be allowed to believe, but all men naturally lack the ability. Consider also the words of Paul, where he says: "We pray therefore in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." [2 Corinthians 5:20] He does not say: Reconcile God with yourselves, for Christ has already done that, but: "Be reconciled to God." Thus he testifies: God is reconciled, but you wicked

knaves are not yet reconciled, God is no longer your enemy, but you are still His enemies, God thinks of you in all graces, but you still think of Him in all enmity. Let these hostile thoughts go, do not look at the dear God as if He were not yet reconciled with you; ah! in Christ He looks down on you with the greatest pleasure, and yet you still have such dark thoughts of your God. An unspeakably comforting passage. And how abundantly is this consolation given to us in Holy Scripture! Scripture always speaks of Christ as a gift, of eternal life as a gift; why? it wants to say: everything has been given to you that makes you blessed. Likewise, it speaks of baptism as a covenant that God has established; why? so that we may know: nothing, nothing shall rob me of God's grace. I am only to hold on to it confidently in faith. No sin, no former ungodly walk may rob me of it, for God remains faithful even if we become unfaithful. Thus our holy baptism is also a strong rock against all temptations of the devil and of conscience; unfortunately, it is so rare to find Christians who take comfort in their baptism from the heart.

Let us also listen to what the Pope says about his false key. He says: "I have the key to heaven, but of course it does not always work; I get into the wrong keyhole and turn and turn, but the door to heaven will not open, that is the wrong key. But of course, even for the wrong key he lets himself be paid, for it is the money that matters to him; therefore, even if his key is missing, he does not pay out the money again; paid is paid. About this false key Luther writes

Luther: "See what fruit the doctrine of the false key has produced. First of all, God must be a liar. For God has firmly and certainly promised through Christ in Matthew 18:18: 'What you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and what you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven'; these are clear, bright, plain words; they suffer no false key." [St. L. 19, 924; AE 40, 346]

But who believes these clear, bright, plain words, namely that every time we are absolved, heaven is opened before us, every time the forgiveness of sins is brought to us? Consider this: Christ did not say to the apostles that if you begin with caution, examine people properly, proceed with great care, and are quite sure that you have good people, repentant people before you in confession, then you should forgive their sins — but he says: "Whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven them", that must remain firm. Therefore let no one think: yes, if, if, if — no! Christ has not added an if, He speaks absolutely, not conditionally. But who believes that? If, for example, two come to confession, and one thinks the other is no good, he thinks that if the other also receives absolution,

the pastor now has the wrong conclusion in his hand. Yes, where does the Savior add to those words: “but if the penitents are no good, then not”? It does not help me that my sin is forgiven through absolution if I do not accept it but reject it through unbelief, but the absolution I receive remains true and valid, just as God's Word remains true despite my unbelief. If I have offended someone, it does not help me that he forgives me if I retain the old enmity, but he does not become a liar as a result. So also here. Of course, if the forgiveness of sin were not included in absolution, our unbelief would be quite right, indeed, quite a good thing; for then God would not give it to us either. But because it is in it, God does not thereby become a liar if absolution does not help us because we reject it through unbelief; rather, the pope with his false key and all those who do not accept absolution make God a liar, and that plunges them into the abyss of hell.

Luther continues: "He says, let it be certain and not lacking: What they bind and loose shall be bound and loose. But what does Master Pope say about this? I truly do not know (he says), I will certainly loose on earth, but whether it will also be loose in heaven, I will let you take care of that..." [AE40, 346]

Truly! a beautiful consolation. Is this not an accursed doctrine, a shameful, godless comedy? Does it not mean that poor sinners are being led by a fool's rope?

Luther goes on to say: "They do just such honor to our Lord Christ with the same, as he has acquired no more with his blood than false keys and uncertain loosing...." (....) For they are not based on God's Word, but on human deeds and things. [AE40, 346]

They think like this: "Where does it say in God's Word that Hans and Kunz have forgiveness of sins? My name is not in the Bible, so I can boldly deny that I have forgiveness of sins. But by this you do nothing less than deny the whole Bible, for all its promises are for you. The Bible is a document of pardon given by God from heaven for all men, and you should accept it. But then they say: alas, a strange doctrine, a dangerous doctrine, which makes people safe, and thus only provides new proof that we all naturally resent the Gospel; we are ashamed of this blessed doctrine, we consider it foolishness.

Luther goes on to write: "If men are pious, then the key unlocks; if they are not pious, then it does not unlocks; according to what men are, according to what is, the key also applies and creates, and nothing else. ... If they thought it to be God's order and office, it would be impossible for them to make

a false key out of it. For God's ordinances are sure and cannot fail, any more than His Word can lie and deceive; just as Baptism and Sacrament and preaching are also God's ordinances, and do not err or fail, and it is not to be suffered that one would make two kinds of Baptism, one true baptism and false baptism, or two kinds of gospel, one true gospel and false gospel, or two sacraments, one false sacrament and true sacrament; for all that God speaks and does is pure truth. ... On the other hand, the fruit of such teaching is also that it destroys Christianity and the faith. For where a Christian hears and is told that the keys may err and be missing, it is not possible for him to rely on them and believe what the key tells him. For what one is to believe, one must be certain or ever be certain that it is God's Word and the truth without all doubt; otherwise there remains nothing, for an uncertain delusion and wavering faith, indeed a real unbelief, cannot be lacking..."

We must regard every church, every confessional, as something that the good Lord has built, where he has placed the preacher like a tax collector, not like someone who takes in money, but like someone who has an awful lot of money and spends it. Then someone comes in and says to him, "How much do you owe God? He answers: ten thousand pounds, and the preacher gives him the sum with the words: there you have it. Then someone comes, but thinks: oh, I won't receive such a sum, I'm far too bad a person! and goes away again. Who is to blame for the fact that he goes away empty-handed? Certainly not the one whom God has placed in the heavenly tax office, but the ungodly man who does not want to believe that what Christ has earned is deposited in the treasury of the Church, and that it is only for distribution. But of course in many cases the preachers are also to blame for the fact that people, even the holy children of God, often leave confession without really knowing whether they have absolution or not, and therefore say: Am I really absolved, or am I still coming out with my sins? Preachers do not do enough teaching. They should say again and again: Come as you will, you will be truly absolved. If you come out of confession with the burden of your sin, it is not because your sin has not been taken away, but because of your unbelief. Consider, to return to the simile given before, if even a simple-minded boy were to learn that the king had signed that document of pardon, nay, if he were to read it, and he were now to run and say to the rebels: be happy, you are free, I have read the king's letter myself, there was also a great seal on it! would not the lad speak the truth? So we should also say to our confessors: you are pardoned, we have read the letter of pardon ourselves, we have also seen the

seal. The document is the Bible, the seal on it are the Holy Sacraments. Whoever therefore does not believe the word of absolution does not believe the Word of God.

Luther continues: "From this you must understand that the keys of the pope are not keys, but the sleeves or shells of the right keys, or, as he shows by the fact and bears them in his coat of arms, they are truly painted, empty keys, which may fill the eyes, but give nothing to the soul; for you hear here that they themselves confess that the keys do not give grace, nor is there any grace of God in them, but man must first acquire grace through himself without the keys. If, then, the keys are so empty that they do not bring grace but demand it, they need not be true keys, for true keys are full of grace and bring and give grace (as we shall hear) even to the unworthy and undeserving. ... Let not the Pharisaic babble here deceive you, so that some may fool themselves as to how a man can forgive sin when he cannot give grace, nor the Holy Spirit."

Truly a true Turkish religion is what the pope teaches here, that man must first acquire grace for himself before he can receive it through the keys. Note also what Luther here calls Pharisaical babble, namely precisely what is so often said today, as the Methodists also always say: “how can a person forgive sin?” We do not forgive sin in our name, but in God's name, as messengers of God, as ambassadors, as Paul calls us. Just as a king can send an envoy to make peace with another potentate, and the envoy makes peace even though he is not a king, so the King of heaven can make peace with men through an envoy, and this envoy is the preacher, appointed by God himself. Just as the messenger does not become a king by making peace, so the preacher is not made God by the authority to give absolution. But just as, for example, an American envoy represents the sovereignty of the entire United States, one of the greatest riches in the world, and his actions are just as valid as if they were done by the entire American people, so it is with absolution. With those words: "Whose sins ye remit" etc., Christ only wants to say: what you do in my stead, on my behalf, shall be just as valid as if I had done it personally.

Luther goes on to say: "Stick to the words of Christ, and be sure that God has no other way of forgiving sin than through the verbal word which he has commanded us men. If you do not seek forgiveness in the Word, you will look to heaven in vain for grace or (as they say) inward forgiveness." [ibid., p. 366]

This is also a powerful passage against the Methodists. True inward forgiveness is only there when you have found it outside yourself,

in words. But if you think that the feelings you have received from a Methodist preacher are grace, you are greatly mistaken. If I want to reconcile someone with me, I must tell him that I have nothing against him. This is exactly how the good Lord does it. As soon as He has told us that He is reconciled with us, it is done. This is how absolution comes about. However, God does not want to come to us personally and visibly, but has appointed the preaching ministry for this purpose. We preachers are employed to say: my dear redeemed fellow human being! you are reconciled, God has nothing more against you. That is actually our ministry; everything else we do is merely auxiliary; but the core, the soul, the heart of our ministry is that we seek to bring every single sinner to the realization that he is redeemed, reconciled with God.

Luther goes on to write: "But if you say, as the factious spirits do, that many hear the keys of binding and loosing, and yet do not turn to them and remain unbound and unloosed, then there must be something else than the Word and the keys: the Spirit, the Spirit, the Spirit must do it! But do you think that he is not bound who does not believe the binding key? He shall know in his time that because of his unbelief the binding was not in vain, nor did it fail. In the same way, he who does not believe that he is loosed and his sin forgiven will also learn in time how surely his sins have now been forgiven and that he did not want to believe. St. Paul says in Romans 3:3: "God will not be lacking because of our unbelief. So we are not talking about who believes the keys or not; we know almost certainly that few believe, but we are talking about what the keys do and give. He who does not accept it, of course, has nothing; therefore the key is not missing. Many do not believe the gospel, but the gospel is missing and therefore does not lie. A king gives you a castle; if you do not accept it, the king has not lied about it, nor has he erred, but you have deceived yourself and it is your fault; the king has certainly given it.... The Pope's false key is so taught, understood and held that it itself, the key, may err in itself, even if a man would like to believe and accept it; for it is a *conditionalis clavis* (a conditional key), an inconstant key... and cannot itself rest on it and say: I know for certain that I have redeemed you before God, you believe or do not believe, as St. Peter's key can say. ... It is God's command and word, which the one speaks and the other hears; both owe it for the salvation of their souls to believe this as surely and firmly as other articles of faith." (Writings on the Keys of 1530. XIX, 1148-1151, 1153, 1175-1177.) [(St. L. 19, 946 ff.; AE 40, 366–368]

Many a man will one day in eternity wonder how countless

his sins have been forgiven him, and he has not believed it, how often the castle of heaven has been given to him, and he would not accept it. Such a person usually says: I am not in such a state that I can believe the word of absolution, but in doing so he only sets his state above God's Word.

Important testimonies of our symbolic books of the doctrine of our Church concerning the power of the means of grace include the following:

Article VIII of the Augsburg Confession. It reads: "Although the Christian Church is nothing other than the assembly of all believers and saints, yet because in this life there are many false Christians and hypocrites, and public sinners remain among the pious, the sacraments are nevertheless powerful, even though the priests through whom they are administered are not pious, as Christ himself indicates (Matt. 23:2): 'The Pharisees sit on the throne of Moses', etc. For this reason the Donatists and all others are condemned who hold otherwise."

For the Donatists taught that if a preacher is in mortal sin, indeed if he has ever denied, then his whole ministry has no power; his Baptism is nothing, his communion is nothing, his absolution is nothing. Indeed, they went even further and said: if not all believers in a community are holy, then there is no church. The Novatians had a related doctrine. They said: if someone falls into mortal sin again after Baptism, Absolution can no longer be pronounced, because it is uncertain whether it will help; they did not want to deny the fallen person all grace, but they referred him to God's mercy. It was therefore strictly forbidden for a preacher to absolve such a person. When the Novatian Acesius once argued with the Emperor Constantine about this matter, he said: we are not of the opinion that if someone falls into mortal sin after Baptism and conversion, he absolutely cannot be saved, for who can measure the riches of divine mercy? but we can do nothing other than commit him to the mercy of God. Constantine replied: my dear Acesius, then first get a ladder and climb it to heaven, if you don't want to know anything about the oral ministry. By this he meant: do you not know, you blind man, that God has made the ministry of the gospel a ladder to heaven? how else will you climb up to heaven?

But consider this: when we speak of the ministry of the gospel, we do not mean a pastor or minister or clergyman, as is customary to say, but nothing more than the divine order, according to which man is to come to the grace of God by being told the Word of the gospel, whether he reads it or hears it or only thinks of it; and again, whether he hears it from a preacher

or from another man, whether he himself be a boy or a little girl or an old mother. When they tell him God's Word, that is the preaching ministry. A strict distinction must be made between the preaching office and the pastoral office. The ministry is not absolutely necessary for a person to go to heaven; but the preaching ministry is absolutely necessary. Whoever does not come to God's grace and heaven through the preaching ministry will not get there. Apart from the Word, God does not want to give His grace to anyone. This is what our old theologians mean when they say that no one can be saved without the ministry of preaching. It is often much better not to have a pastor (*Pfarrer*) if one has a shameful clergyman (*Pfaffen*); but without the preaching office, i.e. without the Gospel, one cannot be saved; this is the ladder to heaven; he who does not use this ladder does not enter heaven, and after death he does not open his eyes in heaven, but in hell.

Furthermore, the Smalcald Articles teach: "Let us now return to the Gospel, which gives not one way, counsel and help against sin, for God is abundant in His grace. Firstly, through the oral Word, in which the forgiveness of sin is preached to the whole world, which is the true office of the Gospel. Secondly, through Baptism. Thirdly, through the holy Sacrament of the altar. Fourthly, by the power of the keys, and also *per mutuum colloquium et consolationem fratrum, Matt. 18: Ubi duo fuerint congregati*. (Part III, Art. IV; *Triglotta* p. 491)

The Large Catechism speaks of the Gospel: "Therefore here again is great need to ask and cry: Dear Father, forgive us our trespasses. Not that he does not forgive sin even without and before our asking (for he has given us the gospel, in which is pure forgiveness, before we have asked for it or ever thought of it). But it is necessary that we recognize and accept such forgiveness." (5th Petition, par. 88; *Triglotta* p. 723)

Likewise, the Augsburg Confession says of absolution: "The people are diligently taught how comforting the word of absolution is, how highly and precious absolution is to be esteemed; for it is not the present voice or word of man, but the word of God that forgives sin. For it is spoken in God's stead and by God's command. Of this command and power of the keys, how comforting, how necessary it is to the terrified consciences, is taught with great diligence; and how God requires us to believe this absolution, no less than if God's voice were heard from heaven, and to rejoice in it and know that by such faith we obtain forgiveness of sins." (Art. 25. par. 2-4; *Triglotta* p. 69)

The Large Catechism teaches of Baptism: "Now there is not only the commandment and order, but also the promise, therefore it is even

more glorious than what God has otherwise commanded and ordered, so full of comfort and grace that heaven and earth cannot comprehend. But it takes art to believe such things, for there is no lack of treasure, but there is a lack of grasping and holding on to it.

"Therefore, every Christian has enough to learn and practice Baptism throughout his life, for he must always work to firmly believe what it promises and brings, the overcoming of the devil and death, the forgiveness of sin, God's grace, the whole Christ and the Holy Spirit with his gifts. In sum, it is so exuberant that if stupid nature could consider it, it would doubt whether it could be true. For consider this: if there were a physician somewhere who understood the art of preventing people from dying, or, though they die, they would soon come to life again and live forever afterward, how the world would snow and rain with money, so that no one could come to the rich man! Now here in Baptism such a treasure and medicine is brought to everyone's door for free, which devours death and keeps all men alive." (Of Baptism, par. 39-43; *Triglotta* p. 741)

Similarly, the Large Catechism speaks of the Lord's Supper: "But here our clever minds, with their great art and wisdom, twist themselves, shouting and rumbling: how can bread and wine forgive sin or strengthen faith? When they hear and know that we do not say this about bread and wine, as in Himself bread is bread, but about such bread and wine as is Christ's body and blood, and has the words with Him. This, we say, is the treasure and no other by which such forgiveness is obtained. Now it is brought and given to us in no other way than in the words (given and poured out for you); for therein you have both that it is Christ's body and blood, and that it is yours as a treasure and gift. Now Christ's body cannot be a fruitless thing in vain, creating and profiting nothing. But as great as the treasure is in itself, so it must be put into the Word and given to us; otherwise we would not be able to know or seek it.

"For this reason it is no reason for them to say that Christ's body and blood were not given or shed for us in the Lord's Supper, so that we cannot have forgiveness of sin in the sacrament. For although the work was done on the cross and the forgiveness of sin was acquired, it cannot come to us in any other way than through the Word. For what else would we know that this has happened or should be given to us if it were not presented to us through the sermon or the word of mouth? How do they know it, or how can they take hold of forgiveness and bring it to themselves if they do not keep and believe in the Scriptures and the gospel? Now the whole gospel and articles of faith: I believe in a holy Christian church, forgiveness of sin, etc., are put into this sacrament through the Word and presented to us. Why

should we then allow such a treasure to be torn from the Sacrament, when they must confess that these are the very words which we hear everywhere in the Gospel, and indeed, as little as we can say that these words in the Sacrament are of no use, so little may we say that the whole Gospel or Word of God is of no use apart from the Sacraments.

"So now we have the whole Sacrament, both what it is in itself, and what it brings and benefits. Now we must also see who the person is who receives such power and benefit. This is in a nutshell what is often said above about baptism and other things: whoever believes these things has what the words say and what they bring. For they are not spoken or preached in stone or wood, but to those who hear them, to whom he says, Take and eat, etc. And because he offers and promises forgiveness of sin, it cannot be received in any other way than through faith. He himself demands such faith in the word when he says, "Given for you and poured out for you," as if to say, "Therefore I give, and command you to eat and drink, that you may receive and enjoy it. Whoever therefore accepts this saying and believes that it is true, has it; but whoever does not believe has nothing, as he who accepts it in vain and does not want to enjoy such salvation. The treasure has been opened and laid at everyone's door, even on the table; but it belongs to it that you also accept it and hold on to it as the words give you." (Of the Sacrament. par. 28-35; *Triglotta* p. 759)

Let us now proceed to the consideration of the doctrine of our [Lutheran] Church

On the **Immutability** of the Means of Grace. (^)

In this, too, she gives all glory to God alone, for she teaches that no man, no creature at all, can change the means of grace as God has ordained them, so that they remain what they should be according to God's will. It is, of course, strange that this has yet to be said in Christendom; it is self-evident that if God decrees something, the creature cannot change it; rather, if it does change it, then the thing that God has ordained no longer exists, and that the creature thereby elevates itself above the great God. But this is what the papacy has actually done. No other ecclesiastical fellowships have dared to do this; all other fellowships except the Lutheran Church are in serious error, but not a single party has ever said: I can depart from God's Word, I can change God's ordinances. Only the papacy has said this, and thus it has put the stamp of the Antichrist on itself; by this the pope has shown that he is the Antichrist, who sits in the temple of God as a god, and pretends that he is God, and “exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped”, 2 Thess. 2:4, thus proving himself to be the adversary, the arch-enemy of Christ within the kingdom of Christ. Yes, he is the real "governor of Christ",

i.e. he has, as far as he is concerned, thrown the Lord Christ out of the church, and where Christ sat before, there this firstborn of Satan has seated himself. Who could have imagined that within the Church of Christ a man would be so bold as to open his mouth with the words: what Christ has appointed, I can change, and thereby it does not cease to be a means of grace, but only the matter is made much wiser than it was by Christ? — Admittedly, it took a long time before the Antichrist dared to say this; he only did so 100 years before Luther, and this happened at the Council of Constance. On June 15, 1415, the council literally decided the following, among other things:

"Although Christ instituted and administered this venerable sacrament to his apostles under both forms, under the bread and the wine, and administered it to his apostles, notwithstanding this the authority of the holy church laws has kept and still keeps the laudable and approved custom of the church that such sacrament shall not be administered after the Lord's Supper.... And as this custom was reasonably introduced to avoid certain dangers and offenses, so for similar or more important reasons the other custom could be introduced and reasonably observed, that although in the ancient Church this Sacrament was received by the faithful under both forms, it is now received only by the officiating priest under both forms, and by the laity only under the form of bread." *) (*Rerum Concil. Constantiensis Tom. III, fol. 646. sq.*)

***)** *Quod, licet Christus post coenam instituerit et suis apostolis ministraverit sub utraque specie panis et vini hoc venerabile sacramentum, tamen, hoc non obstante, sacrorum canonum autoritas, laudabilis et approbata consuetudo ecclesiae servavit et servat, quod hujusmodi sacramentum non debet confici post coenam. ... Et sicut haec consuetudo ad evitandum pericula aliqua et scandala rationabiliter introducta est, sic potuit simili vel majore ratione introduci et rationabiliter observari, quod licet in primitiva ecclesia reciperetur hoc sacramentum a fidelibus sub utraque specie, tamen postea a conficientibus sub utraque specie et a laicis tantummodo sub specie panis suscipiatur.*

The thoughts here are, of course, so interwoven that the reader does not immediately realize what satanic blasphemy lies in them. But note especially the first word "although" and the later "notwithstanding", in Latin "*hoc non obstante*". Here, then, this synagogue of the devil admits that Christ certainly instituted Holy Communion under both forms; it further admits that the ancient Church therefore always administered it under both forms; but here, it continues, the authority of the holy Church is to be considered. It must be borne in mind that it is a laudable and approved custom of the Church not to do it in this way; indeed, there are certain dangers and annoyances here, for the sake of which it must be changed; it is great wisdom that they have

begun to do it differently. So here they declare: in spite of the fact that Christ wills otherwise and although it is written otherwise in the Bible, and although the old church was obedient to the Lord in this, we do not give the cup for the sake of certain dangers and offenses. These wicked hypocrites want to say the following: when the chalice is handed out, some of its contents could easily be spilled; but then the blood of Christ would fall to the ground and could not be picked up again like, for example, a piece of bread from the ground; rather, it seeps right into it and because of this terrible danger the laity should not be given the chalice. But this is the same hypocrisy as when the Pharisees wanted Christ to be crucified, but declared that they would not go into the judgment house because they would become unclean there. That the blood of the Son of God should be shed, they thought quite right; but that they should go into the judgment house, their tender consciences would not suffer, although in this they were only following their own man-made commandment. The papists also have such tender consciences, for they do not violate what they have ordained, but what the Lord Christ has ordained they think they may change. Truly, whoever knows that the papacy departs from the ordinances of Christ with full awareness, that it admits this itself and yet says: nevertheless, we as the holy synod declare that we do it better and more wisely than Christ has ordained, whoever knows that the papacy has decreed thus, and he does not believe that the pope is the Antichrist, cannot be helped. For if a godless atheist says that the Bible is a book of fables, that is a small thing compared with what the pope is doing here. He cannot say otherwise, because he does not believe that the Bible is God's Word, which is why he speaks so blasphemously about it. But such a man can become a different person and be saved in a few minutes if the Holy Spirit knocks on his door and God forgives his blasphemy. But what will a pope say when he appears before God's judgment seat and God says to him: "You child of the devil, what have you done? You have admitted before the whole Church, indeed before the whole world, that it is my order, but you have taught that you have the power to depart from it and do otherwise! Your blasphemous mouth has said that you do so because of the great dangers and offences connected with it, that it is wise to avoid them, so you wretched knave have spoken more abominably in public than the devil, for you have said that you are wiser than I am, and have deceived millions into accepting these blasphemies as a great revelation of the Holy Church! Truly, whoever does not realize that the pope is the Antichrist is struck with blindness, for man can go no further. That the pope teaches in this way is much worse than when someone says: there is no God. For he says: yes, of course, there is a supreme being, an all-powerful, most powerful God, but I can correct God; he sometimes does wrong things,

but that is what I am there for with my councils, we do things differently, and that puts things right. Truly, what a terrible antichristian sin is going on in the papacy, and now it is called a Missourian quirk that we teach that the pope is the Antichrist. Isn't that terrible? Three and a half hundred years ago God, by great grace, made manifest the mystery of wickedness; we accept this with thanksgiving to God, and are vividly convinced from God's Word: it is so; and for this we are considered to be people who have certain quirks, that is, who put something into their heads which their imagination fools them into believing. Well, let them do it!

The words of our Savior in Matthew 5:18 and 19 also apply here: "Truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter will pass away," etc., a very terrible judgment of the Lord. But consider this: the Savior does not say that whoever neglects one of these least commandments will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, for we all do that; how often has someone preached or spoken something false, dissolving one of God's commandments. Rather, the Savior adds: and teaches people thus, he is the least in the kingdom of heaven, that is, he is excluded from the kingdom of heaven. The fact that one does not believe quite correctly in things that do not belong to the foundation of salvation should not condemn us; but to say: this is certainly a commandment of God, but it is only a small commandment, it need not be held so strictly, it condemns absolutely, it plunges into the infernal abyss. And that is what the Pope is doing with his change to Holy Communion. When the Augsburg Confession was delivered in 1530, the papists "issued" a counter-confession. In it they reproached the Lutherans, among other things, with the injustice that they held it so highly that they only served Holy Communion in one form, for this had been introduced by the Church at the instigation of the Holy Spirit; and when the Emperor issued an edict threatening the Lutherans with death, the clergy took care that this reproach was also blackened in it. In general, Luther publicly declared that he did not believe that this writing came from the emperor; rather, he considered the papists to be the authors, because he did not want to trust the emperor to utter such blasphemies as were contained in the writing. He wrote a special pamphlet against it, entitled: "Glosses on the supposed imperial edict", in which he speaks thus, among other things:

"The other lie is that they…say: the Christian Church, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and for good reasons, has salutarily ordered and commanded that only one form should be served (outside of Mass) .... These lies blaspheme both the Holy Spirit and the Christian Church."

With these words the papists blasphemed the Christian Church,

in that this wicked society claimed to be the Church of God, and yet consciously departed from the commands of God.

Luther writes further: "This is by no means to be suffered. For Christ says John 16:13-14: 'The Holy Spirit shall come and glorify him'; he does not say that he shall change or darken him. Again John 14:26: 'The Holy Spirit shall bring to your remembrance all things,' He says, 'what I have said to you; do not say that He shall cancel or change what I have said. Since, then, it is clear and evident that Christ teaches both of these things in the gospel, the Holy Spirit must glorify and bring to remembrance the same doctrine; if he does not do this, but changes or abolishes it, it cannot be the Holy Spirit; or Christ would have to lie, since he calls the Holy Spirit his glorifier or praiser and reminder of His words."

Christ does not say of the Holy Spirit that he would teach the disciples better what the truth is, but that he would teach them what he had told them, because at that time they were still so blinded that they did not yet understand Christ's words. The Lord expressly says that the Holy Spirit would not teach them anything new, so those words of the papists were also a blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.

Luther continues: "From this it follows that the 'speaking in', which changes or defiles both forms (although in the Gospel Christ has ordered them through his word), is not of the Holy Spirit, but of the wicked devil from hell. ... Whoever may say that the church changes or does not keep Christ's word and order is doing as much as if he were calling the holy church a debauched harlot of the devil."

Holy Scripture calls the Church the bride of Christ, Christ's spouse, Christ's household honor, but that would be a beautiful bride who despises her bridegroom's words in the same way as the papists, who claim to be Christ's Church, do with the Lord's words about the Lord's Supper.

Luther continues: "Therefore we Christians should condemn this edict with all our hearts as blasphemy and say: Cursed are both the edict and its authors, Amen!"

What powerful words! And why did he write this? Because he did not want to suffer the honor of God to be taken away from Him with regard to the immutability of the means of grace. But this is how faith speaks in the midst of the greatest need. Just think what heroism it took to speak like that in those days. The emperor had just reconciled with the pope, and the pope urged him to carry out the edict with bloody force. So the emperor's sword hung over the head of every Lutheran. Many of them must have thought: now is the time to speak out quietly; and what does Luther do? He let it go out into all the world: cursed are both Edict and its authors, Amen! He was certainly convinced that the emperor had not made the same; but he had

signed it, and therefore these words applied to him also. Where it was necessary to give God the glory, Luther did not remain silent, nor did he fear the emperor and his sword. But of course, where God raises up such heroes who fight for his honor, he also gives his enemies a despondent heart, so that they are afraid of a rustling leaf. Thus the emperor dared not take any action against Luther, who had undoubtedly been informed of these "glosses" by the clergy. He knew only too well that Luther had the whole nation behind him; if he attacked him, he would have the revolution in the empire: that is why he was afraid.

Luther continues: "Against such blasphemy we set these thunderbolts, since Christ says: 'These things do in remembrance of me. Which words he speaks to his church, and calls them to do it, and not to change or abolish it. Again, Matthew in the last chapter [28:19-20]: 'Go ye therefore, and teach all nations to observe the things which I have commanded you.' ... Truly, these and similar sayings leave the churches no power to change or abolish Christ's Word, but cast them under Christ's Word and call them to keep and do it as a serious commandment of God, which He wants to punish where it is not kept; how much more will he punish those who still abolish and change it!"

It is bad enough if someone does not do what Christ has commanded; hell already belongs to such a person. But where is there a hell for the rascal who speaks so blasphemously of the Lord of glory that he pretends to have the power to make something wiser and better than Christ?

Finally Luther writes: "And—God forbid!—where the Christian church would have power to change and abolish God's Word, we would no longer have a certain Word of God. For this is clear: where it can change one Word of God, it can also change all other words of God, including the one so that it itself can be founded and confirmed as a Christian church. For here there remains no reason nor distinction why it should change one and not the other, because it has power over them. Thus she would like to change and abolish the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and even herself, so that she would have to be nothing but the devil's whore; just as the pope's church is the one that seizes such power over God's Word and robs it of it with blasphemous iniquity." (Glosses on the alleged imperial edict 1531. XVI, 2023-2026.)

Yes, the pope's church not only wants to change all of God's commandments, but it has actually done so, which would be worthy of a detailed discussion; the pope has dispensed with all ten commandments. Such a pope's church is obviously not the true church, but the devil's whore. There are also children of God in the Roman Church, which of course Luther does not mean here; but those who hold with the pope, the bishops and cardinals, even the priests, who see through the matter, these knaves who rob God of glory in all things, are truly not the Church of God,

but the devil's synagogue. It is therefore an incomprehensible blindness, an apostasy from an extremely important truth, if today one no longer wants to believe the doctrine that the pope is the Antichrist, even blasphemes it, and yet knows how the pope changes the sacraments. Truly, whoever does this also robs God of his honor.

But an anti-Christian spirit is also revealed in the fact that the modern theologians make God's Word uncertain, deny the Lutheran doctrine of the inspiration of Holy Scripture, leave the decision of doctrinal disputes not to the Word of God but to the pronouncement of the Church, and turn the teachings of Scripture into open questions. But note the difference between "anti-Christian" and "pertaining to the Antichrist". The modern theologians always change God's Word; but where does this come from? Because they do not believe that the Bible is God's Word. For as soon as one examines them closely, one realizes that they would never dream of believing that the Bible is the Word of God. None of them believe that every word of Scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit. As soon as they deny that one must be strictly bound to the Bible, this is anti-Christian, but does not pertain to the Antichrist. For the Antichrist says: of course the Bible is inspired by the Holy Spirit from the first to the last letter. The Council of Trent says so, and every orthodox papist admits it; but that is the terrible thing, that they admit it, and yet ascribe to themselves the power to depart from it. In this way they elevate themselves above everything that is called God or is worshiped, and show the nature of the Antichrist. For this consists in the fact that the pope is involved in certain abominations in which no one but he finds himself. This is the pope's desire to persecute the Gospel and to put his teaching in its place. His whole government goes against the truth that man is justified and saved by grace through faith for the sake of Christ. This is the core of popery, let us hold fast to it! The popes have indeed fallen away from God's Word, but so have other people; they have also lived like the Sodomites in the most abominable vices, but so have others. This, then, is not the antichristianity of the pope. Whoever has the right knowledge of the Gospel will also recognize the pope as the Antichrist. That the modern theologians do not want to and cannot recognize this is due to the fact that they have fallen away from the Gospel and thus also from the Reformation, as for example Consistorial Councilor Münchmeyer, who already in 1853 at the Leipzig Conference openly declared in a speech there: “Sentences such as: ‘the Pope is the Antichrist’ ... we consider to be factual blasphemy”. (*Lutheraner*, Vol. 10, No. 12 [p. 91, col. 2]) How shamefully the Pope perverts the means of grace of the Word of God is also shown by the fact that he equates the Apocrypha with the canonical writings and the Latin translation of the Bible, the Vulgate, with the original text. How the papists deal with God's Word

in general is shown by the rascal who declared that if the pope decrees to take Paul's epistles out of Holy Scripture and put Aesop's fables in their place, then these too must be regarded as God's Word.

Other people also change Holy Communion, such as the half-mad Abstentionists, who teach that one should not take wine because it is a dangerous element and contains poison. Even the famous Beza says that at Baptism and the Lord's Supper one may take any other material than that prescribed by Christ; it need not be water, or bread, or wine. As much as these people show that they are blinded by the devil, they do not, like the pope, want to change the means of grace by virtue of an assumed authority, while the pope says: because I am Pope, I can change the means of grace. He means: for this purpose I am Christ's governor, that I can change the household in the house of God, just as, for example, a steward, when the master of the house is away, can also change this and that in the house. So he himself reveals that he thinks that Christ no longer reigns in his Church, whereas he will reign in his kingdom until the last day, indeed until eternity. What He orders is praiseworthy and glorious, everything else is rebellion and revolution, pure warfare against Him.

Let us now go on to consider the

9th Point of the Third Thesis, (^)

which speaks

Of **Conversion**,

we will see how in this doctrine, too, our Church gives all glory to God alone.

She says: It is God alone who converts man; no man does the slightest thing. When a person is converted, it is a great miracle performed by God. Holy Scripture expressly says: "Convert me, Lord, and I shall be converted"; and again: "With fear and trembling work out your salvation, for it is God who works in you both to will and to do, according to his good pleasure." Now, of course, it is true that our reason cannot agree that God should do everything all by Himself and that man should not cooperate in the slightest. It will immediately raise the objection that if this is so, then God must be to blame if so many are not converted; if He does everything alone, and therefore must also take away the resistance in us, if man is not the cause at all that he does not reluct to be converted, then God must be the cause that so many are not converted and saved. So says our reason, and indeed, this is a completely incomprehensible mystery. But however incomprehensible it may be, however contradictory it may seem, we Lutherans ask nothing about it. We do not wish to see God's honor impugned in this doctrine either, but maintain that

God converts man all by Himself, and if man wants to do anything for his conversion, it is all in vain, indeed, only an obstacle to it. For man can certainly hinder his conversion, but he cannot bring it about. Luther wrote to Prior Bercken in 1517: "It is no miracle if a man falls; but it is a miracle if a man gets up again and remains standing afterwards." (XXI, 534 [St. L. 21a, 24; not in Am. Ed.]) He meant this in all seriousness, as all converted children of God know. They cannot understand where it comes from that they have come to knowledge and others have not. They are perhaps from a large family, and they alone have found Christ; the other members of the family have heard the same Word of God, but those have rejected it with their feet; it has only provoked them to ridicule. But these soon realized it, they experienced what Lydia experienced, whose heart was opened by the Lord when the apostle preached to her. In the same way, Peter's sermon pierced the hearts of some, so that they asked: "Dear brothers, what shall we do to be saved?" while others thought it was a mockery. Where did this come from? We do not know, it is up to God alone.

Of course, this much we know: they willfully resisted, for if they had not willfully resisted, they would certainly have been converted. But why the good Lord did not convert them by force — that was also in his power — we do not know. In short, the conversion of man is a great mystery. Whoever thinks: “It is easy to say where it comes from that some are converted and others not, that some are just willing, accept everything nicely, and so they are converted, but others are malicious, they do not accept it, and so they are not converted”, is very much mistaken. Indeed, if this were as clear as it is made out to be, the whole of Christianity would be no mystery at all. Then it would be just such a doctrine as all other doctrines, which say: if you are good, if you are pious, if you improve yourself, you shall go to heaven; but if you are wicked, ungodly, if you do not improve yourself, you shall go to hell. This is the teaching of the whole world and of the old Adam, with which we come into the world immediately. But God's Word says the opposite; it says: if you are to be saved, God must have mercy on you; therefore, when He comes with His grace, do not resist Him freely! Hence the apostle also says, "Work for your salvation with fear and trembling," and does not add, "For it depends above all on your cooperation, as is expected," but, lest anyone should think this for God's sake, he continues, "For it is God who works in you both to will and to do, according to His good pleasure." With this he wants to say: Man, you cannot convert yourself; therefore, when God knocks at your door, do not resist, when God calls you, answer him quickly,

when God's Holy Spirit comes to your heart, do not resist! You must not think: yes, now I have no time, now I have no desire, I must first participate in this pleasure, I must first gain the advantage, I am now in a position that I cannot be so concerned about being saved; I want to postpone it. Oh, the apostle wants to say, "work for your salvation with fear and trembling!" That does not mean all kinds of self-doing, all kinds of self-wrestling and fighting to persuade the dear God to give us grace, Paul is not even thinking about that, because you can do nothing, God has to do everything. Therefore, when He comes, lie down at his feet and say, "If you want to have mercy on me, you have my heart, my soul! — Who among us, if he is a righteous Christian, would not have to confess: I truly would not have sought the dear God if He had not sought me out; I would never have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ if the Holy Spirit had not placed this precious good of faith in my heart; I have not acquired it by my own doing, I have not prayed for it, I have not fought for it, it has come upon me in this way! ? I have a brother who is unconverted, I was worse than him, the gospel came to him too, and he blasphemed and mocked it, and I could not resist him, I had to say: oh yes, this is the kind of teaching I need, I had to lie down before my Savior and say: there you have me, you are the only one who can take away my burden of sin. I don't know how that happened; I only know one thing: for so long I didn't want to, for so long I resisted, for so long I let myself be held back, but finally he became too powerful for me and overcame me, he persuaded me, and so I was converted. Anyone who is truly converted will have to speak like this, and anyone who thinks that he did it so beautifully himself, that he was so willing, that he helped himself, but that it also cost him a lot of work, a lot of tears, a lot of prayer, is a miserable hypocrite blinded by the devil; he can do nothing, nothing, God has to do everything. David also knew this when he prayed: "Create in me a clean heart, O God." [Psalm 51:10] God alone is the creator of the new man and he who has made his own heart does not have this heart, but has a false, lying, pharisaical heart. Thus the Lord says through the mouth of Isaiah 65:1: "I am found of them that sought Me not", and Paul says: "God, who called the light to shine out of darkness, has given a bright light into our hearts." Yes, just as a fish is caught with a hook, so people are caught by the Word of God; just as God is the creator of light in general, so he is also the creator of the light of faith. This is biblical doctrine, this is also Lutheran doctrine, which gives all glory to God alone, but which is of course also an abomination and an annoyance to all Pharisees in the world, even to those who rail against the Pharisees, for there cannot be a worse Pharisee

than the one who ascribes the honor of conversion to himself, while he owes it to God. So also [Johann] Arndt says: “Adam would not have been found if God had not called him.” So say all our orthodox fathers.

Dr. Heinrich Müller writes: "As much as we appropriate to ourselves in the work of salvation, so much do we take from God, denying His honor and the power of Christ's death." (*Himml. Liebeskuß*. Chap. 7. § 7. p. 70.)

How we must also rejoice here that we are children of the Lutheran Church. What a terrible deception the Methodists, for example, live in! They just say that they have "done away" with conversion, with salvation, as they express it; they say: I know I am converted, but it has cost me something. How much I have wept, how many a night have I spent lying on my knees and struggling! Yes, poor man, you have fought, but not with the dear God, but with a cloud, you have only played an outward game, and if you had sweated blood, all would have been lost; for you can only get a different heart if God gives it to you, and what you have done is all lost work. Christ says: "I tread the winepress alone."

Balthasar Meisner writes: "Everything that is attributed to free will in the conversion of man is subtracted from divine grace." (*Ανθρωπολογίας sacrae disp. 21. p. 3.*.)

Thus everything that is attributed to oneself in the work of conversion is taken away from God, for God has said that he wants to do everything on his own. Therefore it is also possible for a true Christian to know that he is converted and yet not become proud. He can confidently say: I am a precious child of God, a saint, and if I do not go to heaven, who can go there? because he knows that he has done nothing at all towards conversion. That is why he speaks so purely in praise and glory of God's eternal mercy, while the one who thinks he has contributed himself cannot possibly boast of his conversion without being proud.

Kromayer writes: "In the article on free will we give the honor to God's grace, that He alone gives both the willing and the accomplishing in the conversion of man." (*Scrutinium religionum*, p. 334.) [The following paragraph was omitted in the 1983 CPH translation.]

All sects, such as the Baptists and Methodists, talk so much about grace that one thinks that they are not proud at all, that they attribute everything to grace. But that is nothing but empty talk, it is not true; they may say so with their mouths, but basically they attribute everything to themselves. Because they fought, because they did this and that, because they went here and there and did this and that, that's why they are converted. Be as faithful as I am, do as I do, then you will be converted, they say. No, if God does not convert us, we will remain in our sins for all eternity, He must

do everything. He must come before us, He must first bring us the Word, we do not seek it ourselves; and when He has brought it, then He must come with it to our hearts, He must enlighten our minds, move our wills, dispel our prejudices, take away our blindness and darkness, our reluctance; And when He has made the beginning, we should not think that we can now convert ourselves with the newly given powers; no, God must also continue, at every stage up to conversion God must do everything all by Himself. Only when we are converted do we begin to work ourselves; the new man must first be born, then he begins to move, to speak, to do; before that he does nothing, just as a child does nothing to be born; but as soon as it is born, it begins to make sounds and to move.

So man cannot decide for himself. Many people imagine conversion to be like being placed at a crossroads where the paths to heaven and hell diverge; now man is given the choice of which path he wants to take; if he takes the right path, he will be converted, if he takes the wrong path, he will be lost. But this likewise robs God of all honor, for if a person can decide for himself to do good, there must be something good in him, and the decision itself would be a good work that he does before conversion. So what do the Iowans do with their false doctrine of decision but rob God of his glory? Therefore, when they fight against our Lutheran doctrine, they are fighting against God's honor. So also writes

Calov writes: "God has committed Himself by the most certain and most holy promises, that He Himself will decide (*determinare)* for conversion the man who is in the workshop of the Holy Spirit and does not maliciously resist the means of salvation." (Cited from a responsum by Dörscheus and Dannhauer against Latermann. *System. X, 54*.)

Those who hold the false doctrine of decision, of course, say: “Our doctrine does not take the glory from God at all, for we do not say that man decides by his own natural powers, but we say that he does it with the powers of grace that are given to him, so nothing is attributed to man at all”. But they do not consider that powers can only be possessed and used by those who are already alive. Now take a stick or a stone and imagine that powers are blown into it — the stone would not care about the powers at all, and everything would remain the same. Forces presuppose a thing which uses the forces; therefore man must already be converted in order to be converted; he must already be awakened in order to be awakened; he must already be renewed in order to be renewed. That is

obviously pure nonsense. No, as soon as man is so far advanced that he can use the divine powers of grace, he is also converted, then the good God has already decided or determined him, then He has already given him a new heart, then He has already born him again through his Holy Spirit, then He is already awakened in the biblical sense. We say: in the biblical sense, because the word "awakening" is often misunderstood. The Pietists understand awakening to be such an undecided state that a person is no longer completely spiritually dead, but not yet fully alive; but this is also nonsense, because there is no middle ground between death and life. Either a person is still dead in sin, or he is awakened from his death of sin. If the latter is the case, he is alive; if he is alive, he is a new man, a spiritual and converted man. Scripture therefore makes no distinction at all between conversion, awakening and being born again. Sometimes this great, mysterious work of grace is described in one way, sometimes in another.

Now someone might say: yes, but you will admit that someone can hear God's Word, and it makes an impression on him, and this can happen for a long time, and yet he is not converted; what will you call this then? To this we must reply: if the impression made on him by God's Word has really produced a new state of awakening, he is converted, however weak this conversion may be; but if the impression consists merely in the fact that for the time God's Word comes to him he feels something of it, this merely proves that God's Word has worked on his soul from without, but it has not yet taken up residence in him, it has not yet produced a new state in him. God stands before the heart of man, as it were, like a general standing before a castle he wants to conquer. He fires at it, cannonballs and bombs fly into the castle, there is a fire here, there is a fire there, a tower collapses here, a breach is made there, but the one who wants to conquer the castle is still outside, not yet inside. The inhabitants of the castle do nothing of the sort to surrender the castle, on the contrary, they defend it with all their might; they plug up the breach, where there is a fire they quickly extinguish it, and at night they rebuild the tower. It is the same when the good Lord converts a person. God bombs the castle of his heart, man feels the bullets, and the thought arises in him: you must become a different person; if you stay like this, you will be lost; if you die today, you will go to hell. But that is still nothing other than the fire of the cannons or the breach that has been made. But those who are in the fortress do nothing more than try to repair the damage that the besieger has inflicted on them; man does the same with conversion, he always resists. Every resistance is as it were a rebuilding of the breach,

every rejection of the divine power of grace is as it were a dousing of the flames with water that are already burning in the heart. Do the inhabitants of the castle, if they love their fortress, do anything to let the enemy in? No, they do everything they can to prevent the besiegers from doing so. He brings out the heaviest artillery and does everything he can to conquer the castle. Everywhere is ablaze, the defenders are losing their ammunition, their food is running out, they are facing starvation. Now they say: well, we must surrender the castle; in their hearts, of course, they are thinking: we would rather put a bullet in the enemy's body than see them enter our castle with the sound of music. And so we do. When the preacher stands in the pulpit and says to the listener: you must be converted, then the listener becomes angry and thinks: I won't go back to church, I don't know how it makes me feel, it makes me melancholy. But behold, Sunday comes, and there it knocks on his heart again: you should go after all, it will probably not be so dangerous, — and he cannot stay at home, he goes again; and this can probably last for months, even years, he always lets God's bullets hit his inner being, and he resists, until finally God conquers the castle of his heart, then he cannot help it, he must surrender to the victor; that is conversion. But now the time begins when the inhabitants of the castle submit to the victor, now the cooperation begins, which previously consisted of nothing more than resistance.

Holy Scripture compares conversion with creation, for we are called new creatures. But what can the thing that is to be created do to be created? what did the world do to be created? it was not even there yet, so it could do nothing. What did Lazarus do to be made alive again? For conversion is called in the Scriptures a making alive — for he was dead; therefore he could do nothing. Christ did it; he said: "Lazarus, come out!" and now he came out. Or what have we done for our birth? Nothing, because it all happened without us. Only when we have been created, born, made alive, only then does our cooperation begin, not before. All those who ascribe to man a part in conversion therefore overturn the whole teaching of Scripture on conversion, take the glory from God and ascribe it to man. For, firstly, we are completely dead in sin, so that we can do nothing at all towards conversion, and secondly, the apostle says that "God works in us both to will and to do", and he adds: "according to his good pleasure". So we should not think: God saves us through the means of grace, now there is no need; as soon as I use them, I will be saved; no, it is God who converts us according to His good pleasure, i.e. if He wants to convert you today,

do not resist and do not think: I want to wait until tomorrow. God certainly wants to save everyone; but He did not say that He would wait for us every hour; if He wanted to save you today and you did not want to, he may say: I don't want to bother with such a rascal anymore. That is why it is so terrible when even Christians are so lazy and sluggish in listening to the divine Word, when they allow themselves to be kept away from church so easily. Perhaps it's just Examination Day, or someone is preaching who they don't expect much from, they quickly stay at home and think: oh, that won't do you much good. O you unhappy person, perhaps that was the hour in which God wanted to convert you, and if you are already converted, perhaps it was the hour in which God wanted to give you a real blessing so that you would not fall away. It is not the bell that calls us, but the good Lord, and where there is no bell and time calls us, we should think that time is the mouth of God calling to us: go to your church!

That is why

Article V of the Augsburg Confession says: "To obtain such fa, God has instituted the ministry of preaching, has given the gospel and the sacrament, by which he gives, as a means, the Holy Spirit, who, where and when he wills, works faith in those who hear the gospel, teaching that through Christ's merit, not through our own, we have a gracious God, if we believe this."

Note the words "where and when He wills", it does not mean: whom He wills, that would be Calvinism, because God wants to work faith for salvation in every person, no one is absolutely rejected by God. But God does not allow the place and time of conversion to be prescribed to Him, rather He wants to prescribe it: if God calls me today to be saved, I should not willfully resist. I cannot say: I am dead in sins, how can I believe? As soon as God calls you powerfully through His Word, the natural resistance is taken away, and if you willfully resist, then you will not be converted. It is indeed God's work alone if a person is converted; but it is only man's work if he remains unconverted. It is a terrible sin when God calls us and we say: I have no time today, come back tomorrow, or when I am old, or in the time of trouble, I will do as the thief did; God will not allow himself to be mocked.

Even passages such as: "choose whom you will serve", or "come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden", do not contain any synergism. They are to be taken in the same way as when the Savior says: "Lazarus, come forth." Someone else could have said of Christ: does he not know that Lazarus is dead? Fools could well have spoken thus; but the disciples did not mock in this way, nor did Mary and Martha

when the Savior said this. Why, they knew that when the Lord Jesus said, "Lazarus, come forth," He would give him leave to come forth. It is quite a different thing when the Lord Jesus says: "Come out", than when we say it. We can call into a grave in the churchyard as often as we like: Man, come out! the dead will not come; but when the Lord will call out on the Last Day: "Come out", then the dead will come quickly, for it is easier for the Lord to give life and wake up the dead than for us to lift a little finger. When He speaks, it happens, when He gives, it is written. So when it says in Holy Scripture: "Repent and be converted", we should not think that this means that man himself can repent and be converted. Some, of course, think that because the prophets speak in this way, it must be a real mockery that the prophets make of people if they cannot convert themselves; but only unintelligent people speak in this way. Those words are God's words, they enter the heart and bring the power to repent and be converted; that is why someone can be converted on these words, because God converts him with these words. We say that man is converted, but we do not mean that man himself does something to be converted, but just as we say of a ship, for example, that it has turned around while the helmsman has turned it around, so God does the same with man. If the Holy Spirit, the helmsman of our soul, has turned us around, then we have turned ourselves around. The ship's heaviness only prevents it from turning around quickly, and it is the same with us; we give God so much trouble that He can only turn us around with difficulty, indeed He cannot convert most of us at all.

All this shows that our Church also speaks in this doctrine, and that we must speak with her:

## To God Be the Glory!

It was resolved to begin with point 12 of thesis III (doctrine of the Election of Grace) at the next Synod Assembly.

20 [1877 Western District essay by Walther] ^

**<AGtG 161>** [page numbers from the CPH *All Glory to God* book.]

# Proceedings of the Synod.

According to the resolution of the previous year, the Synod continued with the discussion of the theses dealing with the topic:

> "That only through the doctrine of the Lutheran Church is all glory given to God alone, an incontrovertible proof that the doctrine of the same is the only true one."

Instead of point 10 of the Third Thesis, the same resolution was followed by point 12, which teaches:

21 [1877 Western District essay by Walther]

## "Also with its doctrine of the election of grace, the Evangelical-Lutheran Church gives all glory to God alone."

Since it had been recognized as very necessary that the doctrine of election by grace be thoroughly dealt with by the Synod, the speaker had drawn up such theses, the first five of which were discussed and adopted. These are as follows:

Thesis I.

It teaches, according to God's Word, "that God has made the conversion, righteousness and salvation of every Christian so highly important to him, and has meant it so faithfully, that before the foundation of the world was laid, he took counsel about it and decreed in his purpose how he would bring me to it and preserve me in it. Item, that he has so well and surely willed to preserve my salvation, because it could easily be lost from our hands through the weakness and wickedness of our flesh, or torn and taken from us by the cunning and violence of the devil and the world, that he has decreed it in his eternal purpose, which cannot fail or be overthrown, and has placed it in the almighty hand of our Savior Jesus Christ, from which no one can snatch us". It also teaches that "in such His counsel, purpose and decree God has not only prepared salvation in general, but has also considered in grace all and every person of the elect who are to be saved through Christ, has chosen them for salvation, and has also decreed that He will bring, help, promote, strengthen and preserve them in the way now reported, by His grace, gifts and effects". (Concordienbuch. Müller's Ausg. p. 714. 708.) (FC SD XI 45-46; FC SD XI 23)

Matt. 22:14. Ephes. 1:4, 11. Rom. 8:28-30. 2 Thess. 2:13.

Thesis II.

It teaches: **<AGtG 162>** "The eternal election of God not only stands and knows beforehand the salvation of the elect, but is also a cause by the gracious will and good pleasure of God in Christ Jesus, so that our salvation, and that which belongs to it, creates, works, helps and promotes; on which also our salvation is founded, so that the gates of hell can do nothing against it; as it is written: "No one will snatch my sheep out of my hand"; and again: "And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed."" (Concordb. p. 705. f.) (FC SD XI 8)

Matt. 24:24; Acts. 13:48; Rom. 8:33-39; Hos. 13:9.

Thesis III.

It teaches that "it is false and unjust to teach that not only the mercy of God and the most holy merit of Christ alone, but

22 [1877 Western District essay by Walther]

also in us is a cause of God's election, for which God has chosen us to eternal life (p. 723) (FC SC XI 88), Ephes. 1, 5. 6. Rom. 9, 15. 1 Cor. 4, 7. whether it be:

a. man's work or sanctification, 2 Tim. 1, 9. Tit. 3, 5. Ephes. 2, 8, 9; Rom. 11, 5-7;
b. man's right use of the means of grace, Acts 16:14.;
c. man's self-decision, Phil. 2:13; Ephes. 2:1, 5;
d. man's desire and prayer, Rom. 9:16;
e. man's non-resistance, Jer 31:18; Isa 63:17;
f. man's faith, Rom. 4:16.

Thesis IV.

It rejects the doctrine "that God does not will that any man should be saved, but, notwithstanding their sin, ordains them to damnation by the mere counsel, purpose, and will of God, that they cannot be saved; rather, it teaches that "not all those who have heard the Word believe and are therefore condemned all the more deeply is not because God has not granted them salvation, but because they themselves are guilty of not learning the Word in this way, but only of despising, blaspheming and profaning it, and of having resisted the Holy Spirit, who wanted to work in them through the Word"; It also teaches that "such contempt of the Word is not the cause of God's providence (*vel praescientia, vel praedestinatio Dei*), but of man's perverse will". (S. 557. 721. 713.) [FC Ep XI 19, FC SD XI 78, 41]

Ezek. 33:11. 2 Pet. 3:9. 1 Tim. 2:4-6. Joh. 3:16. Rom. 11:32. Matt. 23:37. Acts 7:51. Prov. 1:

Thesis V.

It teaches that "concerning those things which are revealed in Christ, God still keeps much of this mystery secret and hidden, reserving it for His wisdom and knowledge alone, which we should not search out, nor follow our thoughts in this, nor conclude, nor ponder, but hold fast to the revealed Word; which remembrance is most necessary, for our ingenuity has **<AGtG 163>** always much more pleasure in troubling itself with these matters than with that which God has revealed to us in his Word, because we cannot reconcile it together; which we are not commanded to do". (S. 715.) [FC SD XI 52-53]

Rom. 11:33-36. 9:18-21.

23 [1877 Western District essay by Walther]

Thesis VI.

It teaches, with regard to the use of the doctrine of election by grace, that in the question "how we may know, from what and by what means, who are the elect who can and should accept this doctrine for consolation, we are not to judge of this according to our reason, nor according to the law, nor from some outward appearance, nor are we to presume to search the secret hidden abyss of divine providence (*praedestinationis*), but to pay attention to the revealed will of God. — Accordingly, this eternal election of God is to be considered in Christ and not outside or without Christ; for in Christ, as the holy apostle Paul testifies, we were chosen before the foundation of the world was laid, as it is written: He loved us in the Beloved. But such a choice is revealed from heaven through the preached Word, when the Father says: 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; him you shall hear'" (p. 709. 717. f.) (FC SC XI 25-26; FC SD XI 65)

Ephes. 1:9; 2 Tim. 1:9-10; — 2 Pet. 1:10; — 2 Tim. 4:7-8.

It has been remarked that we have probably never had more cause to approach our doctrinal negotiations with fear and trembling, and thereby to completely despair of our reason, of all our wisdom, than this time; for it is one of the greatest mysteries that God has revealed to us in His Word, which we are approaching in these days. The doctrine of the election of grace concerns, as it were, the very foundation of the great, unfathomable mystery of our salvation, into which even the angels long to look without being able to fathom it. Oh, what a terrible sin we would commit if we wanted to mix our own thoughts with God's thoughts, indeed, if we wanted to pass off our own thoughts as God's thoughts! How? What we miserable, sinful, short-sighted people think here in time, that we want to declare to be thoughts and counsel of the great God, which he conceived before the foundation of the world in endless eternity? Far be it from us! We truly could not commit a more terrible sin, for in doing so we would actually be trying to cast God off His throne and make ourselves God. Certainly we are all filled with these thoughts at the present moment; we are frightened by the possibility that we should falsify anything in this eternally sacred and important point. It could cost hundreds and thousands of immortal souls, dearly bought by Christ, not only in the present but also in the future. Therefore it is truly necessary for us to cry out to God that he would preserve us from error and open our eyes so that we may see in his light the light which he has also shed on this saving and yet so mysterious doctrine in his holy word. **<AGtG 164>**

24 [1877 Western District essay by Walther]

But because it is revealed openly and clearly in Holy Scripture, we can also confidently proceed to contemplate it in faith, even if we achieve no more than — to use Luther's words — just a little taste, a little sweet smell of it. If God gives us even this, the blessing will be overwhelming; for there is no more glorious, more comforting, more delicious doctrine than that of eternal election; it summarizes everything sweet, delicious and comforting that God's Word contains.

There are now three main questions that we must answer:

1. is there any doctrine at all in Holy Scripture of an election — and that of only a number of people — to eternal salvation?

2. what is the nature of this doctrine according to Scripture? and do we find it in our church, namely in its confession?

3. to what extent does this doctrine, as our church has drawn it from Scripture, give all glory to God alone?

For not only is it our original task to show the latter after the discussions of the last years; but if this is the case, it is quite certain that we have not misunderstood Scripture. For it tells us that everything created and revealed by God is created and revealed for his glory. Once we have convinced ourselves of these three things under God's grace, then we can go home again in good spirits, knowing that God has also given us poor sinners the grace of God: God has truly revealed and given us poor sinners even this most consoling doctrine, so that we may live all the more cheerfully and one day die all the more surely blessed.

So the first question is this: Is there a doctrine of the election of individual people to eternal salvation that was already given by God before the foundation of the world?

We answer: Yes, there is such a doctrine, even if almost all recent theologians who have written dogmatics deny it. Among these we find only one who admits an eternal election, that is Professor Philippi in Rostock; whereas all the other famous theologians of modern times, a von Hofmann in Erlangen, a Kahnis in Leipzig, a Vilmar in Marburg, even a Thomasius, who had the mark of a godly Christian in his life, do not believe in the election of individuals to salvation. It is all the more necessary that in this terrible time of apostasy, when this doctrine is almost universally rejected, we strengthen our hearts in this aspect of our most holy faith. Yes, God has already chosen a number of people for salvation from eternity; he has decided that they should and must be saved; and as surely as God is God, so surely will they be saved, and no one else besides them; this is what Scripture teaches, and this is also our faith, our teaching, our confession. But where does Scripture teach this? In the passages quoted in our first thesis, which we shall briefly consider.

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Matt. 22:14. Here the Lord Himself says at the close of His parable of the marriage which a king made to his son: "For many are called, but few are chosen." He does not say: a small number, but: "few", **<AGtG 165>** in order to indicate that really certain individuals are chosen; just as the word "choose", "elect" indicates that they are taken out of the others. The elect are thus taken out of humanity, indeed, out of the number of nominal Christians. How absurd it is, therefore, to speak of election and to refer it to the whole of humanity, as e.g. von Hofmann does!

Ephes. 1:3-6: "Praise be to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things through Christ. For as he hath chosen us through him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him in love; And hath ordained us unto the adoption of children by himself through JEsum Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, by which he hath made us accepted in the Beloved."

Here Paul names the goods with which believers are blessed through Christ, v. 3, and gives election as the very first of these, v. 4, just as it goes without saying that this must be, so to speak, the oldest, first and highest good. For even the Son of God only became a man in time and only redeemed us in time. In the same way, it is only in time that we are called, awakened and converted, justified, sanctified and finally raised to glory.

It should also be noted that the apostle expressly says that we are chosen through Christ; therefore it is an ungodly doctrine to say that the election was first made by God in eternity and only then was he able to enable his Son, so to speak, to carry out his counsel. Conversely, Christ is the eternal reason, and because and, to speak humanly, after God the Father wanted to give his dear Son for the lost world of sinners, therefore and only then could he, without ceasing to be God, choose all those who would believe in this his Son to the end.

When it then goes on to say, "before the foundation of the world was laid", a new aspect is thereby made known to us, namely that election is eternal. Whoever thinks that election consists in the fact that when a person converts, God now chooses him, is very much mistaken. Rather, this happened long before the world was.

If it then goes on to say: "that we should be holy and blameless before him in love", we are taught that holiness and blamelessness are not the reason but the purpose of our election; election, on the other hand, is the reason for our holiness and blamelessness. God

did not choose us because he foresaw that we would walk blamelessly; on the contrary, he chose us that we might become holy and blameless.

It goes on to say: "and has chosen us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ." This is to show us the full glory of election, namely that God has decided from eternity to make us poor sinners his children. Truly, nothing greater can be given to us, for it is said at the same time that we are also chosen from eternity to eternal life, to dwell in God's house and to partake of all his goods. It is not for nothing that the holy apostle repeats the words "through Christ"; he wants to remind us once again that all salvation, especially election and what belongs to it, is sought in the Lord Jesus, who is the very book of life.

The following expression: "according to the good pleasure of his will", is also extremely important. We should learn from this that we are not chosen according to the will of any creature or according to our will, but according to God's will. But this will of God is not itself determined by any other will; therefore the apostle says: "according to the good pleasure of his will." **<AGtG 166>** So if we were to say to God: why did you choose me? he would answer: because I so willed. If we were to ask further: why did you will this? he would answer: it was the good pleasure of my will. Yes, the good Lord does not allow himself to be tutored by us; we should know that we are in his hands. He alone has created us for this temporal life; he alone, according to his pure and simple good pleasure, also gives us eternal life.

Finally, the apostle comes to the cause of election, v. 6, and says: "to the praise of his glorious grace, by which he has made us accepted in the Beloved." So when we get to heaven, we will have no reason to praise ourselves. We will not be able to say: Well, now I am in heaven, but I also let it get to me; what have I prayed, how many tribulations have I patiently endured, how have I been so willing to serve my neighbor! No, this accursed praise will not resound in eternity; but all the elect and all the angels of heaven will have only God's grace to praise. It is all, all grace: that, dear brothers, must be our guiding star also in these negotiations of ours. We must be terrified at the thought of letting in any doctrine that would take the glory from God, that it is all, all vain grace and nothing more. And yet this danger is so close! The whole of modern Christianity is designed to make people think that they are great saints and that they are better than other people and will therefore go to heaven. No, I do not hope to be saved because I think

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I am a hair's breadth better than the greatest sinners, but because God has revealed to me in his words that it is only once the good pleasure of his will to make of me poor, lost sinner a memorial of his eternal grace and to set it up for all eternity. Only he who thus applies the doctrine of the election of grace is on the right track; and if he only babbles about this doctrine, he will not blaspheme God, like all self-righteous Pelagians who ascribe anything to man in this respect.

Finally, the apostle adds the words: "Through whom he has made us accepted in the Beloved." So the dear God has not seen anything in me that would have made me pleasing to him; oh no, he has only seen something in me that makes me very displeasing to him; we are by nature an abomination and an abhorrence in his sight, but in his beloved Son he has looked upon us, in his Son he has been able to choose us, he has drawn us to his Son, and now we are pleasing in his sight.

Verse 11 reads: "By whom also we are made heirs, who were ordained beforehand, according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his will." So we have come to the inheritance because we have been predestined (for this means "predestined"). Indeed, before we were created, before we were born, God predestined us to salvation, and why? It says: "according to the counsel of his will." God does not need to ask a man, an angel, or even an archangel: he does everything according to the counsel of his will; he has counsel enough, and he has always followed this counsel; praise be to him for it!

Romans 8:28-30: "But we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also ordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. And those whom he has ordained he has also called; those whom he has called he has also justified; and those whom he has justified he has also made glorious." **<AGtG 167>**

In this passage, too, we find the seat of the doctrine of election by grace. Paul had previously spoken of the cross of Christians. They could now say: "Yes, if it looks like this, if the apostle presents us with such a sad future, who will still consider themselves to be the elect? This is Paul's answer in v. 28: Whoever God needs as an elect person, everything must serve him for the best!

V. 29. is often not interpreted correctly. For it is said: Here it says: those whom God "foreknew, he also predestined"; thus he looked into the future and recognized beforehand how people would

behave, and thought: those whom I see to be godly, I will save; those whom I see not to be godly, I will cast into hell. But that would be nothing other than a general conclusion about our salvation; then there would be no election at all. No, if we compare the biblical passages in which it is said that God knows and recognizes His own, we see that this expression means nothing other than: He loves them, He has chosen them, elected them, accepted them for His own and recognized them as His beloved. John 10:14, for example, the Lord says: "I know those who are mine and am known by those who are mine." By this He really does not merely mean that He knows where they come from, what they look like, what kind of work they do, etc.; with these words He rather wants to testify to His faithfulness as a shepherd and say that He has chosen His sheep to be His own and embraces them with eternal love. This recognition is therefore the recognition of love. Many other passages of Holy Scripture prove this. Acts. 2:23, for example, is the same word in Greek that is used here in Romans 8:29. Will anyone now claim that the dear God had no closer connection with his Son than that he knew beforehand that he would do this and that, suffer and die? No, but Christ's suffering and death was God's counsel, indeed, was at the same time the counsel of God the Son and the Holy Spirit; for what one Person of the Trinity does outwardly, the other two Persons also do. So if the Father has seen and recognized his Son beforehand as the Sufferer, this means that he has chosen him for his atoning suffering.

Compare also 1 Peter 1:2, Rom. 11:2 and 2 Tim. 2:19, where the word xxxxxxxxxx used in our passage is everywhere taken in the sense of of election.

Christian Stock confirms what has been said with the following words: "The Greek word *'proginosco'* (previously provided) means, according to the figure of speech which is called metonymy, the effect which follows the foreknowledge. Hence it is just as much as decree beforehand, decree beforehand 1 Peter 1:20, where the Lamb is called God "provided beforehand" (*proegnosmenos*). In this passage is not understood a mere foreknowledge, but such as is connected with a counsel and with a decree, according to which God in his eternal counsel so decreed and ordained that the work of redemption should be accomplished through his only-begotten Son, as the appointed Mediator of the human race." (*Clavis N. T. p. 242.*)

Likewise the Rostock theologian Quistorp writes: **<AGtG 168>** "The words Rom. 8, 29: 'Which he foreknew,' must be understood of the special foreknowledge with which the approving will is connected, which is called by the scholastics the knowledge of approval and love." (*Annott. in omnes libros bibi. Ad 1. c.*)

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Furthermore, Polycarp Leyser writes in the Evangelical Harmony on John 10:14: "I am a good shepherd, and know my own", as follows: "He knows them in such a way that he knows that they are predestined by the Father from eternity, and by loving them he zealously cares for them." *(Ad 1. c.)*

Bengel says in the *Gnomon* on 1 Peter 1:2: "according to the providence (xxxxxxxxx) of God" (according to which the strangers are "chosen"): "It also includes the will and love in itself." (*Ad 1. c.*)

Luther explains the words: "According to the providence of God" as: "According to God's order." (*Ad 1. c*)

But, it is objected, if providence means election, the same thing would be said here twice; and this tempts Diele to believe that providence here means nothing more than foreknowledge. But the apostle does not merely say, "whom he has appointed, them he has also ordained," but he adds, "that they should be conformed to the image of his Son." So he wants to tell his readers: "You are in doubt about your sonship with God because you have to endure so many tribulations. You think you cannot be the elect. But this is no reason for doubt at all, for whom God has chosen for salvation he has also ordained to the cross. The election of grace is therefore not merely a choice to go to heaven, but a choice to go through the cross and tribulation.

When Paul continues in v. 30: "But those whom he has appointed, he has also called," etc., he goes on to say that election to grace includes everything that God wants to do for the poor sinner in order to bring him safely to heaven. The election of grace is also an election to a calling, to justification and to glory. The first link in the chain of our salvation is election, the second is redemption, the third is calling, the fourth is justification, and the fifth is glorification, which is all the way up in heaven. What fools, therefore, are those who think that the doctrine of election is a dangerous doctrine! It would only be so if God had revealed nothing more about it to us than that he had decided to take some people to heaven. But he has revealed much more to us, as we have just seen. Let no one say, "Oh, I am chosen; I may live as I please, but I am going to heaven." For by living ungodly, a man proves that God has been compelled to number him among the rejected. God was also pleased to choose him, for he wants to make the whole world blessed; but he who is such a wicked man that he asks nothing of the dear God should not be surprised if he once opens his eyes in hell after death; for God has chosen not only to salvation, but also to the whole Christian life. No one

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goes to **<AGtG 169>** heaven except the one whom God leads in this way; but that we give this way is not our merit, but God's free grace.

2 Thess. 2:13: "But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and in the faith of the truth."

This passage is often held up to us as a proof that man is chosen for the sake of faith, because it says at the end: "in the faith of the truth." But everyone can see that it is preceded by "in the sanctification of the Spirit", so God must have chosen man for the sake of sanctification. Now all Christians admit that we are not chosen for the sake of sanctification, but that we are saved by grace alone; so the expression "in the faith of the truth" obviously has a different meaning than: for the sake of faith. For Paul wants to say: We are chosen for the sanctification of the Spirit and for the faith of the truth. This peculiar way of speaking occurs very often in Greek, that one says: this is in and for the cause, and one wants to say: this is for the cause. A parallel passage is, for example, 1 Thess. 4:7, which says: "For God has not called us to uncleanness, but to sanctification." The Greek actually says "in sanctification". Now no Christian would be foolish enough to think that we must first become holy and then God will call us, but rather the opposite: God calls us so that we can become holy. That is why Luther rightly translates it as "for sanctification." Our passage must be understood in the same way: We are chosen from the beginning for salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and in faith, that we may be in sanctification and in the faith of the truth, that is, in obedience to God's Word.

These cited passages show in an irrefutable way that the doctrine of the election of grace is revealed in Holy Scripture, just like the other saving doctrines of our faith, e.g. the doctrine of justification, of holy baptism and others, in sun-clear, bright and unambiguous words, so bright that even the simplest Christian can recognize and understand them.

The newer theologians, therefore, who deny this doctrine, only prove their unbelief. Let us listen to some of their testimonies.

Thus Dr. v. Hofmann writes: "According to Scripture, the object of this eternal will of God is not man as an individual, but it is man, or, to put it another way, mankind. . . It would now be decidedly wrong to say of 'being chosen' (xxxxxxxxxx) that it denotes the eternal destiny of certain individuals to salvation. . since it is rather first of all the church, and indeed the whole church of Christ or an individual as a member of it, of which it is said that God has chosen it.

It is said of the individual Christians because and in so far as they are members of the church." (Proof of Scripture, I, 193. 199. 201.)

The unfortunate man here virtually denies that individuals are chosen, invoking the fact that the apostle calls a church elect. But every Lutheran Christian knows that in Holy Scripture, by means of the synecdoche of whole visible communities, beautiful things are said which belong only to individuals among them. This is done for the comfort of the dear children of God who are among the **<AGtG 170>** hypocrites. It is just as when I say of a field of wheat that it is wheat, although I see that there are also tares among it; or as when I call a ring gold, although it is mixed with copper; yes, as when I call silver money silver, although there is often very little silver in it. The name is often given to the noble part of the whole thing: so also Paul does not mean to say that the visible church is the elect, but that there are elect in it.

The absurdity of von Hofmann's assertion is also evident from this: If the elect are the outward crowd of Christians in general, then I can be an elect and still go to hell; for many who outwardly consider themselves Christians and go to church go to hell. We do not want to be such chosen ones; we thank God for that.

Luthardt writes: "The basic error" (of the Lutheran doctrine of election by grace) "is from the beginning the too direct relationship to the individual, instead of to humanity as God wills it in Christ, into whose fellowship then only the individual enters through faith. These individual believers, however, are not the object of a special and particular predestination, but in them the one and general counsel of God's love is realized historically." (Compendium. Third ed. p. 95.)

Thus, according to Luthardt, God did not have individual persons in mind from eternity, but only the great human race; he sent his Son to redeem it, but it itself can now continue to see how it gets to heaven.

Vilmar writes: "More fruitfully ... the Lutheran dogmatists could unquestionably have developed the doctrine of the Formula Concordia if they had asked themselves whether there was not reason in the Apology to understand election as a representation of the foundation of the Christian church as an institution of salvation as a whole, i.e. to eliminate election as relating to individual persons altogether, i.e. to assert election for individuals only in so far as these individuals, in being separated from the world among the saints, are included. i.e. to assert election for individuals only insofar as these individuals are included in the separation of the Christian congregation from the world, among the saints." (Dogmatics 1874. p. 16. f.)

To him, then, election is the foundation of the Christian church as an institution of salvation. Truly, one can hardly believe one's eyes when one reads such words from men who want to be great theologians.

Thomasius writes: "In itself, the divine purpose has no relation to individuals (*personen*), there is no counsel concerning the election of individuals, *) [*) „Kein *decretum de singulis eligendis*."] but ordered love. **) [**) *Voluntas ordinata*] In other words: God's love rests on Christ, the Beloved, and in him on all who unite themselves to him in faith, who become one person with him through faith. **<AGtG 171>** What these are, that is not the content, not the purpose of this counsel — it is therefore not complete on this side, and not because it is aimed at the behavior of men. . . . And so, if I may say so, it is only gradually fulfilled with the individual persons; who these are, of course, God knows in advance by virtue of his presence, but that is not the content, not the purpose of that general decision about the people who are to be saved." (Christ's Person and Work. 1853. I, 400. f.) "The eternal purpose ... is not an individual choice, but ... a universal will of grace, embracing the whole lost human race, not, however, a bad universal will, but a will decided and established in Christ, Ephes. 1:4; for it consists precisely in the fact that God wills to save mankind in Christ, the object of his love and the author of our salvation, and only in Christ, that is, insofar as they surrender to him in faith, not without and apart from him." (The Confession of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, etc. 1848. p. 219.)

Thus even Thomasius himself allows election to be based on God's general will of grace and calls it "ordered love"; for God has ordered that those who believe shall be saved, but those who do not believe shall be damned. But this is the order of redemption, not that of election. We Christians know that if we believe, we have God's grace and our sins are forgiven; and this is so certain to true Christians that they are ready at any moment to lay down their lives for it. But now we think: Yes, I have faith, I have forgiveness of sins, but will I also be saved? How many have already had faith, but have been "deceived" by their flesh and blood, blinded by the world and seduced by the devil, have fallen away and gone to hell! Now God knew this from eternity past, that his poor Christians would be tormented and frightened by such thoughts, and would be in such distress that they would not be able to keep themselves in the faith. Well, he thought (to speak humanly), I will remedy that. I will ordain from eternity that such and such shall be saved,

and all the devils in hell shall not snatch them out of my hand; I will not only bring them to faith, but also keep them in it and thus save them. Defiance be commanded to the creature that would put my counsel to shame! But the newer theologians want to deprive us of this sweet consolation. We should be allowed to believe that we are in grace, but we should think: I will probably be lost after all; for I know what an evil heart I have, what an impression the world makes on me, how cunning the devil is! is; how quickly I can fall away and be lost! — Oh, it is terrible! —

In contrast, Philippi writes: "Among the Lutheran confessional writings, the Formula of Concord was the first to establish a detailed and coherent doctrine of election. This is one of its merits, which alone secures it an imperishable importance among the confessional writings of the church." (Doctrine of the Faith. IV, 60. f.) **<AGtG 172>**

How pleasant it is to hear such a voice among the newer theologians!

The Lutheran theologian Wandalinus, professor at Copenhagen, gives an excellent definition of election by grace in the following words: "Predestination or election is the eternal act of God, by which, according to the good pleasure of his will, and solely for the sake of the merit of Christ, he has chosen out of the whole mass of the fallen human race all those men to eternal life of whom he foreknew that through the means of salvation, which in time should be offered to all without distinction, they would truly and to the end believe in Christ, the Savior of all men, so that by virtue of this infallible and unchangeable counsel and action they might attain salvation to the praise of his glorious grace." *(xxxxxxxxxx san. verb. Havniae 1703. p. 132.)*

He calls election an act, so that we may know that it does not consist merely of thoughts which God receives because he stands afar off. Note also that Wandalinus does not say: "because", but: "of whom he foreknew". He only wants to describe the elect, but does not want to make faith the cause of salvation, which is only the means.

Our Dietrich Catechism also gives a good explanation of the election of grace. (Question 321.) It says: "It is that act of God which, according to the purpose of his will, he has determined by his grace and mercy in Christ alone to save all those who will persevere in believing in Christ to the praise of his glorious grace."

If we now go into the content of our first thesis in more detail, it should be noted in advance that the wording of this, as well as the other theses, is deliberately taken from the Formula of Concord, so that

everyone may know that no new teaching is to be given here, but only the teaching of our confessions is to be repeated.

Up to now, in the discussions of the last few years, we have only heard that God's glory shines forth from all those doctrines which apply to all men without exception, as from the doctrines of the Word of God, of providence, of justification, of the means of grace, etc. These are all teachings that are for all people. But now we come to a doctrine which relates only to the elect; not because the good Lord does not grant it to all men, but because there are certain persons who do not want it to the end; therefore it cannot benefit them.

It is now said in our **<AGtG 173>**

## Thesis I.

It (namely, our Lutheran Church) teaches, according to God's Word, "that God is so concerned about the conversion, righteousness, and salvation of every Christian, and so faithfully meant it, that before the foundation of the world was laid, he took counsel about it and decreed in his purpose how he would bring me to it and keep me in it." (FC SD XI 45)

The Formula of Concord does not speak here of people in general, but of Christians; for election concerns only Christians. What a great love of God shines forth from this teaching! It is already an unspeakable love that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world and through him opened heaven to men, and that he calls all men to enter through the open gates of heaven. But what can we say to the fact that he also destined his elect for salvation from all eternity and therefore advised them, as it were, what he should do so that they would certainly enter heaven? He knew, when he had created men, that they would fall, that the devil would seek to disgrace his work; so now he took counsel what to do so that the work of redemption would not be disgraced. Well, he thought (to speak humanly): The devil shall not do with this work as he did with the work of creation; I will see to it that a great and immeasurable number of men shall certainly be saved; and that is election. Now the devil may come with his whole infernal army: these will be saved, for their salvation is based on God's counsel, which he has decreed from eternity. What love! But someone might say: "God is not only love, he is also holiness and justice! That would be a strange honor for God if only his love flowed out of this teaching." But holiness and righteousness also shine from it; for he has also decided from eternity not to choose

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all those who would reject his Son. Thus he has testified before heaven and earth that he will only accept those who have the fulfillment of the law. Whoever does not have this will be cursed by the law, and God will not save him, for God will not cease to be holy and righteous in order to bring to heaven the ungodly wicked who do not want to know anything about him. The Reformed also teach that a number are saved by free grace, and that others are damned; but the latter, they say, is because "God does not want to save them, because he even created them for sin and hell." But it is not God who acts in this way, but the devil; for only the devil, if he could, would call someone into existence in order to determine and condemn him to sin. Therefore, however much the Reformed may cry out that they alone give glory to God, they are lying; for according to their teaching, God has not only chosen the elect by free grace, he has also made it so that those who are not chosen do not go to heaven. However, they do not go to heaven because of their sin, but before the good God had even thought about what should be done with the sinner, he made the following decision: "I will consign some to heaven and some to hell; but so that everyone may see that it is just that I condemn them, I will consign them to sin." If they have sinned, then, **<AGtG 174>** according to this terrible teaching, God says: "Look, it is right for them to go to hell, because they are sinners." But of course, he created them in the first place so that they should fall!

Our thesis goes on to say:

Again, that He has so well and surely willed to preserve my salvation, because it could easily be lost from our hands through the weakness and wickedness of our flesh, or torn and taken from us by the cunning and violence of the devil and the world, that He has decreed it in his eternal purpose, which cannot fail or be overthrown, and has placed it in the almighty hand of our Savior Jesus Christ, from which no one can snatch us.

It is really hard to understand how a Christian can be completely calm who knows nothing of the election of grace, especially when he is young and does not yet appear to be about to die. One who is near death may well be confident, even if he does not have this teaching, because he says to himself: "I believe in my dear Savior and will be saved through this," and in such faith he also enters heaven. But he who is still in his full strength and bloom must always think: "What a wicked heart I have, how weak I am against all temptations; oh, will I be saved?" But it is just as difficult to understand how someone cannot be completely calm if he believes in the election of grace;

for he can say to his God: "My God, you do not forsake me; you have not only called me: it is also your grace that I am saved from my ruin. Now I am your dear child; it is impossible for you to abandon me." Yes, the fact that God has given us the doctrine of the election of grace is an immeasurable addition of His love to the gift that He has given us His only Son. It is a greater love when someone not only gives me a gift, but also ensures that I do not lose it again. For example, if someone gives me a golden staff and I still have a thousand miles to travel, the gift is already a great gift; but if I still have to travel the long way, perhaps even through a forest where robbers live, I may lose the staff again in the next hour. If the giver tells me: I will also send the gift safely through the forest to your home, this is obviously a greater love than if he had only given me the gift. In the same way, God has not only given us the faith that leads to salvation; he also ensures through the election of grace that we will not lose it again; and if we do lose it for a time, that we will certainly regain it. For an elect person can certainly lose faith, but he cannot die without first having been restored to it again; the election of grace does not suffer that. Of course, if I were to willfully, stubbornly, maliciously and stubbornly resist the Word of God, I would be lost; but that would only prove that I am not a Christian. For although a Christian can very easily lose grace, he does not willfully and stubbornly resist it; for how could he hate the God who has done such great things for him as he has experienced and still experiences daily? Therefore a Christian can always be joyful and confident, for he knows that the God who has chosen him will not abandon him in the weakness of his flesh, but will keep him in faith to the end.

Our thesis continues:

It also teaches that, **<AGtG 175>** "God in such His counsel, purpose and decree, not only prepares salvation in general, but also (has) considered in grace all and every person of the elect, who are to be saved through Christ, elected to salvation, also decreed that He would bring, help, promote, strengthen and preserve them in the way now reported, by His grace, gifts and effect."

How gloriously explicit it is here that God has chosen all and every person of the elect! It is precisely against this that the newer theologians argue; but that is our consolation. Let us therefore hold fast to both extremely comforting doctrines: not only that God has redeemed the world, but also that he preserves and saves every single person of the elect

in faith until the end! How many in our congregation find a testimony of God's gracious election! The devil once led their fathers, who immigrated here from Germany 40 years ago, astray; but God did not allow the gates of hell to swallow them up; close to the shipwreck of faith, they were saved, were strengthened and encouraged in their faith again and, with God's help, will also die blessed.

Each of us will already have recognized in the treatment of this first thesis that we also give all glory to God alone through the doctrine of the election of grace; this is now also testified to, among other things, by the

The Formula of Concord testifies to this in express words when it says: "By this doctrine and declaration of the eternal and saving election of the elect children of God, God is given his glory wholly and completely, that through sheer mercy in Christ, without any merit or good works on our part, he saves us according to the purpose of his will, as it is written in Ephes. 1: 'He hath made us meet for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glory and grace, by which he hath made us accepted in the Beloved'." (Again, Art. XI, p. 723 [§ 87])

We were, as it were, an abandoned infant, thrown into the wilderness immediately after birth and lying there naked and bare in its blood, a disgust to all who passed by. God saw us and said to us: You shall live! When all the others speak to him: How can you accept this man? He is worse than I am! then God says: This is according to the purpose of my will. How often do we see that when God's Word comes somewhere, the worst are often converted, while the best become God's enemies! How incomprehensible it is that grace is offered to certain people and they reject it! Then, of course, the Pelagian says: "Oh, I will explain that well; some accept grace because they are better than the others who reject it"; the Calvinist says: "That is simply because God has chosen some but rejected others." While these two rob God of his glory, the Lutheran says: "God gives his grace to some according to the purpose of his will, while others reject grace through their unbelief", thus giving God all the glory and man, as he should, all the shame.

For a proper understanding of Scripture, we must also consider and distinguish between the various expressions which it uses to designate our doctrine. There are three of them: 1. intention, **<AGtG 176>** 2. Election (*Wahl*) or election (*Erwählung*) or providence (*Versehung*), 3. Decree (*Verordnung*). Election and providence are one and the same. Election and decree differ from each other in that I speak of the same thing, but in different respects. If I say of someone that he is chosen,

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I mean to say that he is chosen by God, set apart from others to be eternally saved. But if I say that he is ordained, I am not speaking of the act of God by which he took him out of the world, but of the fact that he ordained him to salvation. Finally, the purpose is the decree which had to precede, as it were, the taking out for salvation. This action is represented in a human way, for men, before they want to do something, first take counsel, so that we do not think that the matter is a matter of chance. So God first took counsel, then chose, and then decreed.

Thus Dannhauer writes: "Election and predestination (*praedestinatio*) do not differ according to the matter, but according to the relation; the former refers to persons (*objecta*), the latter to the ordering of means to an end." (*Hodos. Phaen. 7. p. 572.*)

Furthermore, Quenstädt writes: "The intention (*prothesis*) and the decision to elect, and election itself are not one and the same, as the Calvinists think; for the intention is one step higher than election, and is the norm and the governing principle of election." (*Th. did. — polem. III, 26.*)

The Methodists have not inserted a doctrine of "election by grace" in their confession, because it does not fit into their system. This is to show that man must do everything for his own conversion; he must "cast them out," as they express it. Even Wesley, one of the founders of Methodism, separated from the strict Calvinist Whitefield after a fierce dispute and became a Pelagian and Arminian; he taught such an election of grace that gives man the honor.

How important, salutary and comforting the doctrine of the election of grace is, is shown in particular by John Gehard in excellent words. Studying such testimonies is all the more necessary in our time, however, as people are now truly afraid to even mention the word election by grace or predestination. People think that a preacher should not preach in the pulpit about things that are taught in Scripture, but which can easily lead a person into temptation. But those who speak in this way do not consider that they are attacking God Himself, for the whole Word of God is for all men, and to an even greater degree for all Christians. Should there be teachings in it that need to be veiled and covered up? No! What God has revealed, we must also preach for our salvation and the salvation of our listeners. We are to proclaim the whole counsel of God for salvation, Acts 20:27, and we are fools if we think there will be bad consequences if we do so. We can confidently leave the consequences to God, who has revealed

his word to us so that it may be preached; he will also see to it that it brings no harm but benefit to those who are of God. It is true that for many the doctrine of election, like the whole Word of God, is a stench of death unto death. But that is not God's fault, it is their own fault. Such are like spiders, of which it is said that they draw poison from a flower from which the bee sucks honey. So **<AGtG 177>** they, too, suck death from the living word of God instead of life. But this is their own fault. For there is no death in the word of God, but only life, just as there is no poison in the flowers which the spiders suck. Rather, just as they first put poison into the flowers, so these godless people also put death into the word of life.

Gerhard concludes the exposition of each doctrine in his Dogmatics with a chapter in which he shows its usefulness. Thus he also gives an eightfold benefit of our doctrine. He writes:

"A sober and scriptural treatment of this mystery (election of grace) shows us the abyss of divine mercy, to which alone our election to eternal life is wholly to be ascribed; it strikes down all boasting of our merits and all confidence in ourselves; it fortifies our certainty of our blessedness resting in the almighty and all-good hand of God; it incites us to sincere love of God, who loved us before the foundation of the world; it nourishes our universal and fraternal love for those whom we hope, by pure grace, to be our comrades in eternal life; it awakens us to a burning zeal for the divine word and to a diligent use of the sacraments, by which means the Holy Spirit wants to kindle, maintain and increase faith in us; it inflames us to prayer and to earnest zeal in godliness, for we are "chosen that we should be holy and blameless" (Ephes. 1, 4.); finally, it equips us to bear all adversity with equanimity, for "whom God hath before ordained, he hath also ordained to be conformed to the image of his Son; knowing that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." (*Loc. de elect. et reprob. § 216.*)

When Gerhard writes here that our election to eternal life is entirely due to divine mercy alone, we also learn how he wants to be understood when he speaks of election "in view of faith". Admittedly, the expression is not entirely to be approved, since it sounds as if our faith is the motive that determines God to choose us, for faith is not the motive in God to make us blessed, but the means by which he overcomes us in order to bring us to heaven. With this expression, however, Gerhard only

wants to say this: God did not choose anyone in eternity for salvation whom he did not know would come to faith; he did not want to save anyone except in Christ, and we certainly believe this too. It is also important that Gerhard also counts this as a benefit of the doctrine of eternal election, that it feeds our love for our fellow believers. For if I believe that God has chosen not only me but also my fellow Christians to eternal life, then I know that I will also live together with them eternally in heaven and praise God, while the unbelievers will be cast into hell. But then I must love my fellow believers all the more; then a king, for example, will also love the pious beggar who lies at his door full of flocks as his brother from the bottom of his heart; for in heaven all distinctions of class, wealth, dignity, even of age and sex will fall away. But why is it that there is often so little love to be seen in churches, that church members are much more cordial with obvious worldlings than with their fellow believers? They lack faith. They believe neither that they themselves nor that others are chosen. This is a sign that they are also children of the world. **<AGtG 178>** For a Christian who believes that God has chosen him by free grace in Christ to eternal salvation also loves his brothers; he knows that there is a world of difference between Christians who love God and the children of the world who blaspheme and mock God. St. John expressly says: "We know that we have come from death to life, because we love our brothers", from which it follows that those who do not love their fellow believers, their fellow church members, are still in death. Such brotherly love, however, is greatly promoted by the doctrine of election by grace. To this end, everyone should allow it to serve them and ask God for faith in it, for this doctrine becomes all the more terrible for us if we know it but do not believe it. If someone knows that God has chosen millions of people from eternity and he is not sure that he is one of them, what a terrible state he is in! Remember this: only faith makes one blessed, in which the I and the We and the Me are added to the divine promises. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given," says the prophet. — It is also very important that Gerhard says here: "The doctrine of the election of grace equips us to endure all adversity with equanimity." For he who believes with all his heart that he is chosen will no longer be particularly grieved by anything that happens to him in this world, for he will say of all this: "This is just what is necessary for God to save me; your God will see to it that you do not perish, therefore he is sending this to you. Therefore, if we lose our possessions, our honor, our health, if we have to leave our fatherland, our father's house, we should think: these are all precious means in the hand of God,

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through which he carries out his counsel of your election to you. Therefore, as dear as our salvation is to us, we should esteem even the heaviest afflictions that God sends us.

## Thesis II.

It teaches: "The eternal election of God not only sees and knows beforehand the salvation of the elect, but is also, by the gracious will and good pleasure of God in Christ Jesus, a cause that creates, works, helps and promotes our salvation and that which belongs to it; on which also our salvation is founded, so that the gates of hell can do nothing against it; as it is written: 'No one will snatch my sheep out of my hand'; and again: "And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." (FC SD XI 8)

Matt. 24:24. Acts. 13:48. Rom. 8:33-39. Hos. 13:9.

There are very many who admit that there is an election of grace, but they understand nothing more by it than that God foreknew what people would be like, and having foreseen this according to his omniscience, he said: whoever behaves in such and such a way shall, I decree, be so and so; whoever is godly shall be saved, whoever is ungodly shall go to hell. But this reduces the counsel of election to nothing more than the mere foreknowledge of God. **<AGtG 179>** But there is a vast difference between mere foreknowledge and predestination. For the fact that I foreknow something is not the reason why it happens; but the other way round: I can only foreknow something because it happens that way. So the fact that something once happens is the reason that God foreknows it, but something never happens merely because God foreknows it: for He also foreknows evil; then evil would have to happen because God foreknows it. Friday is not followed by Saturday merely because I foreknow it; nor does anyone go to heaven merely because God foreknows it. Therefore, because it is already certain through election that someone will go to heaven, God knows it in advance, so it must be something quite different from mere foreknowledge; it is a counsel, an act of God, the reason and the cause why it happens that I am saved. I may well know that someone will be executed tomorrow; but this knowledge of mine is not the cause of the execution. The criminal judge, on the other hand, who sits in judgment over the criminal, does not merely know in advance, but decides on the execution. His decision, his judgment is the cause that this person must die tomorrow. There are therefore two things in the judge: predestination and foreknowledge; the former is conditioned by the latter. In the same way,

with God there is not only foreknowledge but also predestination with regard to the salvation of the elect; the former is dependent on the latter. The fact that God has decided to save a number of people is the cause of their salvation; if this were not so, no one would be saved except the little children. May God always have revealed that he who believes to the end shall be saved, but if he does not keep us, all is lost. Whoever thinks: O you believe, you have the Word and the sacraments, now you cannot lack your salvation, — does not know himself, for he does not know that there is nothing good in him, and therefore also not the retention of God's grace. So also the Augsburg Confession says in its 19th article that when God had withdrawn his hand from Adam and Eve, they lay there, overcome by the devil. Therefore, if he did not hold his hand over us, no believer would remain in faith and enter heaven, for he could not stand against the terrible onslaught of the devil, the world and his own flesh. Therefore God has decreed: I will provide, I will help and promote, so that those whom I have foreseen will certainly go to heaven. The consequence of this is that whoever is chosen cannot perish, even if all the gates of hell are shut against him. God is greater than all. If he has decided to save me, he will also carry out his counsel.

From the doctrine of the election of grace thus shines not only God's love and justice, but also his omnipotence; for the greatest powers fight against our salvation: the devil and his infernal army, the countless multitude of the children of the world, all the objects of the visible world have now become a tree of temptation for us after the fall, our own flesh is our greatest enemy, — and God defeats all these terribly armed enemies of our salvation, for he is the Lord.

But just as God's omnipotence shines through our teaching, so does God's wisdom. Men live through one another like an inextricable bondage, so that the fate of one person always depends on that of another, on whole communities, on the nation in which he finds himself, **<AGtG 180>** on the friends he has, on his parents and brothers and sisters, and not only with regard to his outward fate, but also with regard to the attitude that is created in him. What unspeakable wisdom it takes to take all this into account in the decision of election, however it may go! for "all things must serve the elect for the best". What a terrible obstacle to blessedness it is, for example, when someone has godless parents who bring him up from childhood only for wickedness, who do not let him go to a Christian school, who call out to him again and again: do not associate with the pious and the muckrakers; who not only do not buy him a Bible,

but, if he brings one, throw it into the fire and blaspheme God! And yet, if such a child belongs to the elect, God knows how to govern all these terrible circumstances in such a way that they must serve the child only for the best.

Yet, all the attributes of God, his omniscience, his faithfulness, his omnipresence, in short, the whole glory of God is reflected in this teaching.

Let us now look at the biblical passages cited:

Matthew 24:24: "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."

In the last days, therefore, the most seductive false prophets are to appear, who have such an appearance that even the elect will be deceived "if it were possible". Note well: it is not where they would not be on their guard that they should be deceived, but "if it were possible", says the Lord. He clearly says that it is not possible. There is of course reason enough to be deceived, namely the seduction and deception and blindness on the part of those people; but election puts down all fear and apprehension. God himself ensures that the elect are not deceived. Truly, we should leap and jump when we read this, for what blessed people we are after these words! We have a God in Christ who sees to it that we are not deceived in this shameful time; who opens our eyes when any false spirit appears, so that we either recognize it clearly or that it does not bring its soul-destroying lies into our hearts. These words also show us that God's providence is not mere foreknowledge, but a provision for salvation. We see a clear example of this in Peter, among others. He had a living faith in his Savior, but his flesh and blood deceived him so that he became too bold and said to the Lord, "Even if they are all angry with you, I will never be angry with them again. Then the Savior had to let him know that he had now relied on himself for once, and that if He did not hold him, he would fall down; and beg of him: a few hours later Peter not only denied the Lord, but also cursed himself and swore falsely! But the merciful Savior had said to him: "I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail." By this he meant that you are an elect person; even if you should now lose your faith, you should not lose it to the end, but should and must regain it. And so Christ says to all the elect: I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; but my prayer has been heard, so it is certain that you cannot perish.

Acts. 13:48: "And when the Gentiles heard it, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord, and believed, as many of them as were ordained to eternal life."

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Paul had first preached the gospel to the Jews, but they rejected it, all the more so because they saw that he was also preaching to the Gentiles. Therefore the apostle turns to them, and the Gentiles, **<AGtG 181>** as they see that Paul is not deterred from preaching to them, receive the word with joy. But where this came from, Lucas says: for "they were ordained to eternal life", xxxx xxxxxxxx. Many translate this word thus: they had entered into the right order; but, first, neither the Scriptures, nor any other Greek writer ever speaks thus; secondly, the *plus quamperfectum*, which stands here, always denotes a past more remote than the recent past. They had therefore already been decreed when they received God's Word in faith, so they had obviously already been chosen from eternity into the number of the elect and that is why they now come to faith.

This interpretation is also confirmed by Arcularius, professor in Giessen, who writes the following about our passage: "Acts. 13:48. it is said that at that time they believed 'as many of them as were ordained to eternal life', which indicates the cause of what Luke had said immediately before about the joy and praise of the word of the Lord, namely faith, which flowed from the eternal predestination of God, as from His source." *Acta app. triumvirati comment. illustr. ed. Fecht. p. 319*...) From this passage, therefore, Arcularius draws the *locus communis* or doctrine "Of predestination or election, as the source and cause of our faith and salvation." (L. o. c. 321.)

Thus Peter also says that we are preserved to salvation by the power of God through faith.

Consider also: what would become of the dear children if God had not ordained them to eternal life and had not chosen to preserve them in faith? As good Lutherans, we believe that baptized children are in the faith, for the Lord once expressly said that we should not vex the little ones who believe in him. How could they remain in the faith if God did not keep them in the faith? They are persecuted by the devil incessantly, just as we are; but they cannot yet hear God's word, read the Bible or decide to pray for themselves. But they may die, they will not perish. They let God take care of them, and he also makes sure that they remain in the faith.

Romans 8:33-39: "Who will blame God's elect? God is here who justifies. Who will condemn? Christ is here, who died; yea, rather, who was raised again, who is at the right hand of God, and standeth for us. Who will separate us from the love of God? Tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake

we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. But in all these things we overcome because of him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor things high nor things low, nor any other creature, will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

So it is not because we fought bravely that we far overcame, but "for the sake of Him who loved us". Here again we see what keeps the elect, namely grace, which ensures that nothing can rob them of God's grace. They can therefore triumph at any time, as Paul does in our passage. For he begins his song of rejoicing after he has written the words which we considered in our first thesis: "But we know that all things work together for good to them that love God." **<AGtG 182>**

Hosea 13:9: "O Israel, thou bringest thyself to destruction: for thy salvation is with me alone."

Let this be noted: man brings all destruction upon himself, but our salvation comes from the Lord alone, and not only in so far as he has sent us a Savior, but also in so far as he gives us faith and keeps it until the end; for God must do all this, for it all belongs to our salvation.

This saying shows most clearly how we also give all glory to God alone with our second thesis. If we were to understand the election of grace differently than we have done, we would cut off all glory from God, for that is what it means to give God all glory when we say that all good comes from him, and all evil comes from man and the devil, whose servants men have become.

Our second thesis, which according to its wording is already the confession of our church, is confirmed by the following further words of the Formula of Concord:

"First of all, the difference between the eternal providence (*praescientia*) of God and the eternal election of his children to eternal salvation must be carefully noted. For *praescientia vel praevisio*, that is, that God pleads and knows everything before it happens, which is called the providence of God, passes over all creatures, good and evil; namely, that he pleads and knows everything beforehand, what is or will be, what is happening or will happen, whether good or evil, because before God all things, past or future, are hidden or present. As it is written... Ps. 139:16: "Your eyes saw me when I was yet unprepared" etc. Isaiah 37:28: 'I know thy going out and thy coming in and thy dying against me.' But the eternal election of God *vel praedestinatio*, that is, God's decree of salvation, is not especially for the pious and the wicked, but only for the children of God, who were chosen and ordained to eternal

life before the foundation of the world was laid, as Paul says in Ephesians 1: 'He hath chosen us in Christ Jesus, and ordained us to be children? God's providence (*praescientia*.) stands and knows evil beforehand, but not in such a way that it is God's gracious will that it should happen. . . The beginning and cause of evil is not God's providence (for God neither creates nor works evil, nor helps or promotes it), but the devil's and man's evil, perverse will." (FC Art. 11, 7-11 Repetition. p. 704 f.) Here, too, we read: The foreknowledge of God is about both evil and good; but the predestination or ordinance not only foreknows our salvation, but also works and creates it. Whoever does not say this, no matter how many beautiful things he may say about the election of grace, still takes the kernel out of the shell, throws it away and keeps nothing but the shell. It must always **<AGtG 183>** be noted, however, that election or predestination refers only to the elect and by no means to the reprobate; for God has not predestined anyone to damnation. God predestines only to life, to happiness. Of course, our reason always wants to conclude: If man can do nothing for his salvation, but God alone must do everything, then God must also have predestined the one who is lost to damnation; but a Christian is accustomed to take his reason captive under the obedience of faith, and this is what he does with this doctrine, and thus he victoriously overcomes all objections and temptations of his reason; he humbly awaits eternity, when God will solve the riddle for him in the most beautiful and clearest way. It is true that the two revealed teachings of Holy Scripture seem to contradict each other: that God has chosen individuals for eternal salvation by mere grace, and that man alone is to blame if he is lost; but it is the rule of faith of the Lutheran Church that when Scripture clearly reveals to us two truths that seem to contradict each other, we believe both. Do the same here, and you will surely be comforted and strengthened. We know that the unity between the two doctrines is there, for God has revealed both doctrines to us, and there is no contradiction in him, nor is there a double will in him that contradicts itself; we just do not yet see the unity. However, we are accused of inconsistency here. For we say that one must not only believe what is revealed in Scripture in expressed words, but must also accept as divine truth what necessarily follows from literal revelation. Nowhere in Scripture, for example, is it said in explicit words that God is triune, but it does teach literally that the Father is God, that the Son is God, that the Holy Spirit is God; it also teaches just as literally that these three are one. Therefore we say: from these "explicit" revelations it follows

of necessity that the true God is a single divine being consisting of three persons, that therefore God is triune, as the Church has always taught. Now they say: Well, if you draw this conclusion, you must also draw the conclusion that God predestines some to salvation and others to damnation, or that God has chosen some because of their decision for grace and rejected others because of their decision against grace. But we do not draw this conclusion; and why not? Because God has forbidden us to do so. And where has he forbidden us to do so? In the whole of Holy Scripture, where He teaches that election is indeed a choice of grace, but that men alone are to blame for their damnation; as, for example, in our passage from Hosea. So we are not inconsistent at all, but we only find obedience to God and his word, and that is our duty and obligation if we want to be Christians. Of course, anyone who does not want to be obedient to God and his holy word can still make that forbidden conclusion, but do not be surprised if this disobedience leads him to despair and hell. Calvin has already made this conclusion, but in doing so he has also become a heretic who turns God into the devil. He thought it was easy to solve the problem that God alone saves us by grace and yet so many are damned: God predestines not only to salvation, but also to damnation. But how terrible! God has created for us humans the law of love and justice, and punishes us temporally and eternally if we transgress it, and He Himself should be so unloving and unjust that He first predestines an immeasurable number of people to sin and then throws them into hell because of it? St. Paul says: "Be ye therefore followers of God"; from this we see: **<AGtG 184>** God is a holy example to us in all good things, even in love and justice; indeed, the same apostle expressly asks when dealing with the doctrine of election of grace Rom. 9:14: "Is God unjust then?" and answers, "Far be it from him!" But more about this in the fourth thesis.

Our noble doctrinal fathers also confirm our thesis.

Heerbrand writes: "There is a great difference between the foreknowledge of God and predestination. The former refers to all creatures, both the ungodly and the pious; the latter, however, to the chosen children of God. Then God's foreknowledge observes a secret order in the wicked and sets a goal for them as to how far he will allow them to go and when and where he will restrain them. But of all this evil, foreknowledge is not the cause, but the evil will of devils and men. But divine election and predestination is the cause of our salvation, in which it is also founded. As the apostle says: "He has chosen us in him (Christ) that we should be holy and blameless before him". (Ephes. 1:4.) And Christ:

"No one will snatch my sheep out of my hand? Joh. 10, 28. And: 'As many of them as were ordained to eternal life believed. Apost. 13, 48." (*Compend. theol. 1582. p. 519*.)

Thus, while election is the cause of our salvation, God's foreknowledge of evil extends only so far as to observe a secret order in it and to set its goal. For example, God allowed the miser Judas to sell and betray the Lord, and for the Lord to be crucified by the Gentiles. The wickedness that was in Judas and Christ's murderers was in God's hands, so that they could do nothing but what God willed. But he did not want the wickedness, because it was already there; but what the people did, he wanted. If the devil had known that he was crucifying the Son of God, he would certainly not have done it, for then he would also have known that he would be overcome by him; but he had not understood the prophets correctly, and so he thought: I once spoiled God's game at creation, and now I want to do it again. But behold! God is wiser than his creature, and so Satan had to enter into God's counsel. Luther compares the government of evil on God's part to the riding of a lame horse. The rider rides such a horse badly; but it is not the rider who is to blame for the bad riding, but the horse. So God also orders evil and sets a goal for it, without being to blame for the evil happening. In God we live, weave and are; he drives us to think, speak and act; but depending on whether we carry good or evil in our hearts, our actions are good or evil; God himself has nothing to do with evil.

Meelführer writes: **<AGtG 185>** "The eternal counsel concerning those who are to be saved, the apostle Ephes. 1. not as a stumbling block, which should not be touched by cautious hearts, but as the source of all comfort and all the benefits of divine grace, which should be well known to every Christian." (*Elenchi ex 1. cap. ep. ad Ephes. 1612. p. 1.* )

Here the counsel of grace is aptly called the source of all consolation and all the benefits of divine grace.

The doctrine of our second thesis is of course not held by the newer theologians. For since they do not believe in election by grace in relation to individuals, it goes without saying that they also do not believe that election by grace is the cause of the salvation of the elect. We therefore do not need to cite any evidence for this.

The Arminians also deny our thesis. Although Calvinists by birth, they are known to reject their master's doctrine of predestination. At first they were quite Lutheran, but because they were not pure in the doctrine of justification, they fell into a Pelagian doctrine of election of grace and ascribed to man a participation in salvation. They say in their confession:

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"It is obviously false that election happened from eternity. There is only one passage in Scripture which seems to affirm this, before the general error arose, namely the passage Ephes. 1, 4." *(Apolog. c. 18. f. 190)*

The Arminians are joined by the rationalistic Socinians who teach that God did not actually know in eternity how people would behave in time, and that he then makes their fate in eternity dependent on this behavior; this is predestination. For example, we read in their catechism:

"In Scripture, God's predestination means nothing other than God's decree, made before the foundation of the world, that he would give eternal life to those who would believe in him and obey him, but punish those who would refuse to believe in him and obey him with eternal damnation. Election, when speaking of our salvation, has a double meaning; for sometimes those who assent to the preaching of the Gospel are called elect by God, and sometimes those who not only assent to the preaching of the Gospel, but also "substitute their lives according to its precepts" are called elect." (*Catechesis Racoviensis. Ed. Oederus. Q. 440. s. p. 913. s.*)

Finally, we must point out that the Formula of Concord uses the word providence in a twofold sense: once as mere foreknowledge, the other time as predestination. As a rule, it takes providence or foreknowledge in the sense of election and usually adds the word *praescientia* where it wants the word to be understood as foreknowledge. It is important to note this difference carefully so that one does not go astray. Soon after it was written, the Calvinists reproached it for understanding only foreknowledge by the word prophecy; but this is already rejected in its defense. It says in the *Apologia* of the Christian Book of Concord: **<AGtG 186>** "Among other things they (the Calvinists) blame the Book of Concord for not sufficiently agreeing with Luther's doctrine, in that it holds that God's providence (*providentia Dei*) is nothing other than his foreknowledge or providence (*praescientia*); whereas the Book of Concord in the Artikulo von der ewigen Vorsehung und Wahl Gottes p. 318 (Müller's edition p. 708.) does not remember the word "providence* (proviäentis.) of God at all, but the German word Vorsehung, and puts the Latin word *praescientia*, that is, providence or foreknowledge, so that no one would be mistaken in the same words." (*Apologia* etc., written by Chemnitz, Selnecker and Kirchner. Heidelberg, 1583. K1. 205.)

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# Thesis III.

It teaches that "it is false and unjust to teach that not only the mercy of God and the most holy merit of Christ alone, but also in us is a cause of God's election, for which God has chosen us to eternal life," Ephes. 1:5-6; Rom. 9:15; 1 Cor. 4:7. whether it be: (FC SC XI 88)

a. man's work or sanctification, 2 Tim. 1:9. Tit. 3:5. Ephes. 2:8-9. Rom. 11:5-7;
b. man's right use of the means of grace, Acts 16:14.;
c. man's self-decision, Phil. 2:13; Ephes. 2:1, 5.;
d. Man's desire and prayer, Rom. 9; 16;
e. man's non-resistance, Jer 31:18; Isa 63:17;
f. man's faith, Rom 4:16.

As a rule, it is taken for granted that God was not moved to create man by something he foresaw in him from eternity. Who wanted to claim that God had to create man because he foresaw the benefits he would bring him and the like; he would simply be making a fool of himself. No, everyone admits that it was an act of free love when God decided to create man. Most people also take it for granted that God was not moved to send his only-begotten Son into the world and have him carry out the work of redemption by something he foresaw in man from eternity. Everyone who still believes in God's Word admits what the Lord says: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son", etc., that the sending of the Son was therefore an act of God's free grace and mercy. But strangely enough, a different view is taken of the gift of salvation through election. It is said that the fact that God has decided to make a number of people blessed, while He has decided to reject others, must necessarily have a reason in man; God cannot, it is thought, act arbitrarily; only a creature without reason or a very frivolous man would do that; who would therefore think that of God? So something must have been seen in man by God that moved him to decide to save some while rejecting others. But first of all one does not consider that there is a huge difference between election and condemnation on the part of God. Indeed, God could not have decided to condemn a man if he had not previously seen that he was worthy **<AGtG 187>** of it; and of course he saw such a cause

in those whom he decided to condemn, namely their stubborn resistance, their impenitence, their unbelief even unto death; this, and nothing else, moved him to decide that they should be condemned. Then one does not consider that the bestowal of salvation is as much a free act of God's love as the creation and redemption of salvation. God foresaw nothing, absolutely nothing, worthy of salvation in those whom he decided to save, and even if he admitted that he foresaw something good in them, this could not have determined him to choose them for that reason; for all good in man comes first from him, as Scripture teaches.

That is why Gerhard says, among other things: "The Calvinists object: If the cause of reprobation is in man, then without doubt the cause of election will also be in him. Answer: 1. There is an unequal relationship between what is being compared here. Unbelief and impenitence unto death, for the sake of which men are rejected by God, are deserving, proper, and complete causes of that reprobation and damnation; they arise from the guilt of our corrupt nature and from the impulse of the devil; there the Father works nothing, the Son nothing, the Holy Spirit nothing. But salutary conversion to God and faith, through which we become partakers of Christ's merit for eternal life, . . . are not a meritorious cause of either election or eternal salvation, nor do they arise from the powers of free will, but they are a work of God."

Gerhard calls conversion and faith a work, i.e. a gift, of God. If I have a poor person in front of me and I give him a hundred thalers, will I say: because he has a hundred thalers, now I love him too? No, I will say the opposite: because I love him, that is why I gave him a hundred thalers. Even if my gift were the reason why I love him, the reason would not lie in the poor man, but in me, who gave him the gift. So man's faith is not the cause of God's love, but the consequence of it, and therefore not the cause of election, but the consequence of it. No matter how much good God may foresee in the chosen one, this can never be the reason why he saves him, for he gives it to him in the first place. But what I give to another, I give to him, if I give it to him rightly, out of love; and if he now has it, this does not double my love for him, but this possession is only a continual proof that I love him. It would be something else if someone had acquired a hundred thalers with great diligence, great effort and sacrifice in order to do good to others; that could of course move me to love him all the more. For example, someone has enough to live on for himself and therefore does not need to work for

himself; but he has read in Scripture that one should work in order to give to the poor, and he now works in the sweat of his brow, despite being a wealthy man, to help the poor: that would indeed be something that should move me to love him dearly. But where is it the case with a man that he could say: the good that I have, I have from myself? The Christian, too, can only say: God alone has worked all this in me; I have done nothing more of myself than resist, if not willfully, yet according to the weakness of my flesh, and where I have not resisted, God has had to take it away. Then I must confess that in all my goodness my flesh's inclination has been **<AGtG 188>** mixed; for if, for example, God drives me to give something, my flesh immediately joins in, thinking: but you are a good man, or: well, God will bless you again. But that is nothing but dung, with which I stain the good work; for only such masters as we are can do that. Therefore, as certain as God works all good things in his children all by himself, it is equally certain that this cannot be a reason for God to choose us. But this is the miracle: the Christian religion is the religion of grace. While every other religion is the religion of piety and so-called good works, the Christian religion, which comes from above, teaches that God says to poor people: I will give you everything, everything, accept it only in faith; and if we say: Yes, we cannot take it, he says: Well, then, I will give you my hand.

Gerhard continues: "2. Therefore Scripture ascribes the election of men to life to God alone; for this supreme work of divine grace depends on no other cause (*principio*) than on God and the eternal counsel of God, which is founded on Christ and ordered by the establishment of certain means; but the same sacred Scripture places the cause of reprobation in men themselves." (*L. de electione. § 188.*)

Note: He says: thus teaches the Scripture, now reason may say what it will, God has spoken, and I adhere to it.

Now compare with this what the newer theologians say.

We are saddened to see that even a man like Philippi, who otherwise wrote so many excellent things and was never ashamed of pure doctrine, despite being an extraordinarily learned man, is not entirely pure in the doctrine of eternal election. He writes in his Dogmatics: "We will not be able to base both the sole efficacy of divine grace in the work of conversion, and rather, looking at the possibility founded in human freedom, that grace, precisely because it is not compelling grace, can reach its goal, both the predestination to life and to death, on the divine

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foresight of human behavior." (Ecclesiastical Faith IV, 15. f.)

He teaches that it is not only the predestination to death that rests on the divine foreknowledge of human behavior, but also the predestination to life; thus God has provided a number for salvation because he foresaw that they would behave rightly. Oh, it is sad! If it were so, no man would be truly humble; and yet it is right what Augustine says, when he was asked what, above all, belongs to Christianity? and answered: Humility, and when he was further asked, what then? again answered: Humility, and for the third time: Humility. But of course Augustine does not mean the kind of humility that even a very cheerful hypocrite has who declares himself to be a sinner, but the kind of humility that says with a heart trembling with joy: "It is God's free, eternally undeserved grace that I am chosen to eternal life, while I belong to hell. But do not think: Well, if it all depends on the grace of God and nothing on the behavior of man, then I need not do anything, but **<AGtG 189>** wait quietly until God prompts me to do this or that! No! Whoever makes the grace of God a bed of laziness should know that even in the days of the apostles there were people who drew the salutary teaching on courageous knowledge and said: "Let us do evil so that good may come of it." But what does Paul say about them? He says briefly, "Which condemnation is quite right." He does not say that one must try to persuade such people with philosophical reasons, but he says of them that they are children of hell and damnation rejected by God. For he who is truly of God does not use divine truths in this way, but when he hears the word of the free grace of God in Christ, it brings tears of joy to his eyes, and now he begins to do good with a rejoicing heart. For as soon as we think that God must look upon the good that we do, then it becomes bad, we become servants of rewards; but when we have become quite firm in our hearts that God does not ask anything about the good works that deserve heaven, but that this alone should be his glory, that he makes us blessed by grace, just then we burn with zeal for good works. Then we bring forth good works like an apple tree brings forth apples. No one needs to call out to it: Bring apples! Nor does he answer: Yes, if I get this and that in return, then I will bring forth apples. No, the sap rises in him to the highest branches, to the outermost tips, and sprouts an abundance of red buds and green leaves and sweet, delicious fruit. This is precisely how the Christian does good works, out of free love and not out of a desire for reward.

The same Philippi writes: "Just as a certain synergism of man in the use of the means of grace cannot be excluded even before the beginning

of the inner, divine efficacy of grace, so also a synergism of the human will to divine grace takes place not only after conversion has been completed, but also during the act of conversion itself". (Doctrine of the Faith. IV, 75.)

Both sentences are false, both the first and the last. There is no human participation in the use of the means of grace before conversion. The good Lord had already given me the Bible, had already built the church and had already appointed the preacher before I heard God's Word. So he comes before me with his means of grace. I do not come to the Word, but the Word comes to me. I can certainly cooperate in the use of the means of grace, but only to hell, for if I push the means of grace away from me. I do nothing more than accept the gift of grace, and God also works this acceptance. — But this is also wrong when Philippi says that there is a cooperation on our part in conversion. No, Holy Scripture compares conversion to revival from death. But what can a dead person do to be raised from the dead? What did Lazarus and the young man of Nain do, and what could they do to come to life? What will we do on the last day to rise from the grave? Nothing, nothing at all. Indeed, Scripture even compares conversion with creation; we are "created for good works". Did we help God a little when he created us so that we would be finished? No, he had to do everything. Only when the work of creation was finished could we move, and God gave us this along the way, we did not get it from ourselves.**<AGtG 190>**

Kahnis writes: "It depends essentially on man whether he remains in the state of salvation until the end. . . If, therefore, only he is saved who perseveres to the end, but perseverance depends on the will of man, it follows irrefutably that salvation has its foundation not only in grace, but also in the will of man." (Die luth. Dogmatik. Leipzig 1875. II, 254.)

Against this our holy Church teaches: In a certain sense, however, one cause of our justification and salvation is in us, namely, that we are poor sinners and cannot help ourselves. For if we were not poor, lost sinners, God would not have needed to give us his grace in Christ. But that is only the motivating cause. The inward moving cause is God's mercy, the outward moving cause Christ's merit.

The Apology says: "Paul writes in Romans 4:13: 'Therefore righteousness must come by faith, that it may be by grace, and that the promise may be sure. As if to say: if our salvation and righteousness were based on our merit, the promise of

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God would still be uncertain and would be of no use to us, for we can never be sure of it if we have earned enough. And this pious hearts and Christian consciences almost well understand, were it not for a thousand worlds that our salvation rests upon us." (Art. 4. p. 102.)

Note this well: Christian consciences would not take a thousand worlds for our salvation to rest upon us; for then they would soon fall, since they would stand on a foundation of sand, and no man would then be saved.

Let us now consider the biblical passages cited:

Ephes. 1:5-6: "And hath ordained us to adoption as sons unto himself by Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, by which he hath made us accepted in him that loveth."

This is a strange expression: "according to the good pleasure of his will"; this is not the way to speak of men. It is said: he does this according to his will. But so that we may know that God's will is determined by nothing other than what is in God, the apostle says: "according to the good pleasure of his will."

Furthermore, when it says: "to the praise of his glorious grace", we see that we are chosen for this very reason, so that God's grace may be praised. It follows that it is not our works, not our merits, that are to be praised; therefore there is no cause of election in us.

Romans 9:15, 16: "For he said to Moses, 'To whom I am gracious, I am gracious; and whom I have mercy on, I have mercy on. So now it is not up to someone's will or running, but to God's mercy."

This is also a strange saying: "To whom I have mercy, I have mercy, and whom I have mercy on, I have mercy on." This seems to be spoken quite foolishly according to reason; for when someone says: "I have mercy on him", he does not need to add: "on whom I have mercy." But the good Lord evidently means to say this: That I am gracious to whom I am gracious has its reason solely in my mercy; that I have mercy on men has its reason solely in my mercy. This passage therefore not only justifies our thesis, but is also extremely important against the papists. For they also know how to talk a lot about "mercy", but they only teach a mercy that must be earned. No man gets grace, they say, he must first earn it. First, they say, man earns grace *ex congruo*, and by this they mean: not because what he has done was worthy of it, but because it **<AGtG 191>** was worth something; God is like a kind Lord who pays handsomely for services rendered. In the end, however, man must bring himself to fully earn the grace of eternal life, and this is what they call *ex condigno*. But our passage shows us that Holy Scripture speaks of a grace that cannot be earned, but rather has its foundation in grace. That is why the apostle adds: "So then it is

not up to anyone's willing or running, but to God's mercy." So here there is no wanting and running, no working, running, working and doing; with this you cannot draw God's grace and mercy down to you, all this is completely lost; but God is gracious to you because of the grace he has.

1 Cor 4:7: "For who has preferred you? but what do you have that you did not receive? But if you have received it, what do you boast about if you have not received it?"

The apostle is saying, "Have you by your own deeds obtained for yourself a place in heaven for those who cannot enter? indeed, have you worked for yourself even the smallest gift that you possess as a Christian? No, if you have something that others do not have, God has given it to you; therefore you must not boast about yourself. Remember that! If we are Christians by God's grace and we see unbelievers around us, we should not compare ourselves with them and say: "Yes, we find godly, and they find ungodly"; but we should say: "God has had mercy on me; oh, that he would also have mercy on these poor blind people!" Nothing, nothing must we ascribe to ourselves, or we fight against God and take from him what is due to him.

These passages sufficiently show that there is nothing in us for the sake of which we deserve eternal life, and that therefore there is nothing in us that could have moved God to choose us for eternal life.

Our fathers also confirm this thesis.

John Adam Osiander writes: "Predestination is an act on the part of God, which is not produced from us, as from us; and the predestined person does not have of himself that by which he differs from the rejected. The opposite doctrine is that of the Pelagians and Pelagianists. See 1 Cor 4:7: 'Who has preferred you? But what do you have that you did not receive? But if you have received it, what do you boast about if you have not received it?" (*Colleg. th. VI, p. 134*.)

What distinguishes the elect from the reprobate, he has not of himself; therefore he must not say: I am better than this or that; otherwise he is immediately included in the class of the reprobate. It is a choice of grace; therefore, whoever does not want to be chosen for this reason until the end is not chosen.

The same Osiander writes: "'The Gentiles who have not pursued righteousness have attained righteousness. Rom. 10, 30. The pursuit of the greatest zeal is (therefore) excluded from the attainment of salvation in time; so, of course, every zeal which is much less will also be excluded from the consideration taken in predestination." (*Colleg. th. VI, p. 136*.) **<AGtG 192>**

The Jews had sought righteousness with the greatest zeal,

the Gentiles not at all. The latter received it, the former lost it: truly a clear proof that there is no cause of election in us.

John Musaeus writes: "Do the Lutherans hold that the cause of the difference, why some are converted and others not converted, has its reason solely in man (*unice penes hominem esse*)? — Answer: "Our people are not wont to say that the cause of the difference, why some are converted and others are not converted, has its reason solely in man, but they all say with one mouth that the cause why those are converted who are ever converted has its reason not in man, but solely in God; but that the cause why those are not converted who persist in ungodliness has its reason not in God, but solely in man." (*Colleg. controvers. Jenae 1701. p. 390*)

Note: Musaeus could say of all Lutheran theologians that they teach with one mouth that etc. But how is it now with the newer theologians? Almost no one says that anymore. A reformed theologian named Krummacher wrote in 1863 in his book "Warum find wir reformtrt und nicht lutherisch?": "The Lutherans believed that man comes to meet God in conversion, and that this is the reason why believers are chosen." In this the man was right that the newer so-called Lutheran theologians believe and teach this; but our church does not believe this, nor did our fathers. We do confess that a thousand and one thousand sighs arise in a man at his conversion; but these are the work of God, not of man. They are all the work of God; no man can be truly grieved over his sins even a little by his own strength; God must work even the smallest sigh.

If someone were to say to us here: "But in this you agree with Calvin, that you say: God has chosen a number of people for salvation, and this election is a cause of their salvation," we would reply: Calvin certainly speaks in the same way, but our doctrine is nevertheless very different from Calvin's. For he teaches, as we know: God had first determined from eternity to save certain men at any cost by an irresistible grace, but to pass by others and condemn them; the second determination was that he would create men to fall; the third, that he would now send a Savior into the world, who alone would be the Savior of the elect; then that he would give the gospel to all the world, but that he would not call those who are not elect in earnest, but only in pretense. Calvin goes on to say that if God works faith in an elect person, he cannot

lose it again, for he has been converted by irresistible grace; even if he does not feel faith, it has merely withdrawn. Of David, for example, he says that he did not lose his faith through adultery, but merely dampened it, so that it continued to glow like a spark under the ashes; the Holy Spirit then, so to speak, only blew into the ashes so that it became a flame again. Calvin therefore cannot actually say in truth: we are chosen "in Christ", because according to his teaching this is not true. With these words he does not mean: God has chosen us because we **<AGtG 193>** have a Savior in Christ, but rather: he has made Christ our Savior because he has chosen us. So it is not Christ but election that is made the basis of all salvation. Rather, he is merely reduced to an instrument, so that through him this eternal counsel of God may be carried out. We will see this in more detail in the fourth thesis.

It is true that the Scriptures often contain such expressions as: turn, repent, work for your salvation, strive to enter through the narrow gate; but these do not contradict the fact that God alone works all good in us, and that man can do nothing good by himself. For if God demands something of us, it does not follow that we can fulfill this demand. Rather, God makes this demand of us precisely in order to show us: Look, poor man, you can do nothing, not even the slightest thing I command you to do. But when God asks us to accept his grace, he also works acceptance on our part; when he asks us to repent, he gives it to us; when he asks us to be converted, he works it in us; when he calls out to us: struggle! create! he gives us the struggle and the creation. We also say of a ship that takes a different course: it has turned, and yet it has not turned itself, but the helmsman. In the same way, we also say: man has converted, and yet God has converted him. But the power for repentance, for conversion, for struggling and working lies in his dear Word; this is power, spirit and life. Just as the word of the Lord: "Lazarus, come out!" brought Lazarus out of the grave, so also the word of God awakens us from spiritual death.

One whole sum of salutary, life-giving teachings is contained in one short word. That the expressions just mentioned: Repent, create, etc., exclude all of man's own work, as can be seen, among other things, from this: "Create, that ye may be saved with fear and trembling." How the Holy Spirit wants this passage to be understood with regard to the work of man can be seen from what follows: "For it is God who works in you both to will and to do, according to his good pleasure." So God gives creation. This passage wants to say this: Consider well, you can

neither convert yourselves nor keep yourselves in the faith. Now God gives you grace, therefore use it well! Do not let the golden time pass, otherwise you will have yourselves to blame if you are lost! Therefore, for God's sake, let no one think: "Oh, when it comes to death, then it is still time for me to repent; therefore I will wait and enjoy the world. Such a delusion is inspired by the devil. No, you cannot be converted when you want, but only when God wants and where God wants. Therefore, since you cannot be converted and cannot determine the hour of your conversion, do it now, when the word comes to you, and do not harden your heart! Do not wait willfully and maliciously until death! That is why it is no joke to stay out of church for once without need. Many think: Oh, it won't matter that I miss church just once. Oh, poor man, do you know for sure whether a sermon will not be preached today that is specially intended and made for you? through which God wants to save you from a great spiritual danger, to rekindle your dying faith, to give you strength for a great trial? Boil, you have shut the door at which **<AGtG 194>** your God stood and knocked; you have missed the hour of grace, it may never return.

Yes, indeed, the doctrine of election is exceedingly warning, and may well startle a man out of his security; for the dear God is not to be trifled with; He is kind, patient, long-suffering, but he is also holy and just, and his wrath burns to the lowest hell. Therefore it may well be that he pursues one person for a long, long time until he has won him over, while with another he only knocks a few times and then goes away. God does not allow the measure of his grace to be dictated to him; he gives everyone enough grace to be saved, but he does not give everyone the same measure. This is what God says when he says through the mouth of the apostle: "To whom I am gracious, I am gracious." Of course, the Word of God always has its power where it is preached, and it also has the power to give life, to save; but man is in such a state of ruin that God still has to press on. This lies in the words: "Now is the acceptable time of the Lord, etc. Today, if you hear my voice, do not harden your hearts." But God does not always do this, he does not allow himself to be dictated to. How often do we experience that God gives us a special grace through a certain passage! How often do we read in the Bible, where everything seems so dry to us; then we read again, and behold, everything appears to us like a paradise, everything is full of light, full of life, everything grips us powerfully, either comforting us or smashing us down; these are special hours of grace. That is why the evangelist also tells us about the apostles: "And they went out and preached in every place, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed

the Word by accompanying signs." Likewise it is written: "To everything there is a season," and again: "Seek the Lord, because he is to be found; call upon him, because he is near." The first chapter of Solomon's Proverbs presents wisdom to us in such a way that it comes to people, and if they do not hear it, it turns away from them again. Thus we also read in the 5th article of the Augsburg Confession that the Holy Spirit works faith "where and when he wills". He has therefore not only determined the time, but also the place of his special effect of grace. Let this be noted! Where did it come from that the thief on the cross, who had a very shameful life behind him, came to the knowledge of his guilt and was saved? After his conversion he could do no other good work than to confess his Lord. Others, on the other hand, find faithful children of God for perhaps forty or fifty years, then they allow themselves to be deceived by the devil, fall away and go to hell. Saul persecutes the Christians, has them stoned and murdered in other ways, forces them to blaspheme, and in the midst of his devilish craft he is converted. The one comes to faith, lives a short time and dies blessed; the other is converted, lives many years, falls away again and loses everything. Then our reason says: Why did the good Lord not let the man die while he was still in the faith, since he would have been in heaven by now, but now he is languishing in hell? We have no answer, we do not know why God does this; we only know this much, that we have nothing to reproach him with, for he is infallible, and that we have no right to call him to account for it; he is the Lord, that is enough. But the apostle says: "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: the severity in those who have fallen, but the goodness in you, as far as you continue in goodness; otherwise you also **<AGtG 195>** will be cut off." Romans 11:22 The doctrine of conversion is also one of the mysteries of Scripture.

So far in our thesis we have generally seen that it is wrong to teach that there is also a cause of God's election in us, and to be convinced of this from God's Word. But now there are many things of which one might think that man must do so if he wants to be saved, and which would therefore have moved God to choose those whom he has chosen. These are the six things mentioned here:

a. Man's work or sanctification.

But that this could not have been a reason for which God chose certain people, we see from the following passages:

2 Tim. 1:9: "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

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Here the "good" works are virtually opposed to grace and the eternal purpose. Whoever claims, as the papists do, that good works are the cause of our election, contradicts the clear Word of God.

Titus 3:5: "Not for works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit."

We are indeed saved for the sake of certain works, but not for the sake of our own, but for the sake of those which Christ has done for us, which is nothing but mercy.

Ephes. 2:8-9: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."

The train of thought is this: "By grace you have been saved," says the apostle. "But how?" someone might say, "does not grace shine upon all men, and yet not all are saved?" To answer this, the apostle says: "Through faith." Most people reject grace through unbelief. If someone should reply: "Then we must give ourselves to faith, so salvation is our work?" Paul continues in reply: "And this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest anyone should boast." It seems superfluous, since the apostle says: "not of yourselves", to add: "not of works"; but the Holy Spirit, in his eternal grace and wisdom, also has the simple in mind, which is why he speaks so clearly that even the most simple-minded can understand him. How shameful, therefore, that often great theologians do not want to understand him! Because our salvation is not of ourselves, we have nothing to boast about, says the apostle conclusively. Whoever has such a teaching, on the basis of which man is given the opportunity to boast about himself, has a false teaching, while the teaching that really and truly gives all glory to God is most certainly divine teaching; no matter how much self-righteous man may take offense at it, God must retain his glory. It is of course true that it is quite unbearable for a self-righteous man to hear that he should not be a hair's breadth more worthy than another who is wallowing in the dunghill of sin; that is a quite shameful teaching for him. He says: "What? We moral men are no better than those who make themselves into beasts?" But it remains: "lest anyone should boast." It is only God's merit **<AGtG 196>** if a man keeps himself moral; for if God were to remove his hand from him, he would make himself just as much a beast as that man. But how much more is it God's grace when someone stands in true faith and pursues sanctification!

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Romans 11:5-7: "So also at this time it is with those who remain according to the election of grace. But if it is by grace, it is not by merit of works; otherwise grace would not be grace. But if it is from the merit of works, then grace is nothing; otherwise merit would not be merit. How then? Israel seeks, but does not obtain. But election obtains it; the rest are hardened."

Paul compares his time with that of Elijah. He thought that the kingdom of God had come to an end on earth, so he asked God to let him die. But he told him that he had kept seven thousand faithful witnesses, so he had already made sure that his word would remain true, namely that his church would stand until the last day. So the fact that there are children of God is attributed to grace, namely the grace of election. Of course, this is a great, incomprehensible mystery, but the words are too clear to be debated. Even if it is a mystery, it is still a blessed mystery for Christians, for they are supposed to count themselves among the remnant. It is the same in our time as it was then, especially in Germany. There, too, the people have by and large fallen away from the faith, but here and there God has kept a few thousand who will be saved. Admittedly, according to God's own words, these are only remnants with whom He must be content, while the devil receives the lion's share; but they are nevertheless precious remnants, for they are children of God and citizens of heaven, while the great multitude is the mass of the damned.

Let us now listen to a few more testimonies.

Gerhard writes: "Augustine opposes the Pelagian opinion of the foreknowledge of the merits for the sake of which election took place with great seriousness in very many passages. . . From the first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, which is the proper seat of this article, many proofs may be added: 1. the word election itself denotes a love of grace. 2. God has chosen us 'in Christ'. Ephes. 1:4 So he found nothing in us for which he chose us. If we could have been chosen for the sake of our worthiness, why would Christ have been necessary? 3. the final end of an act does not belong to the act; but the good works are in part the final end of election. Ephes. 1-4.: "He chose us to be holy and blameless." 4. God chose us "before the foundation of the world was laid," Ephesians 1:4. So our works did not move him to predestine us. 5. God predestined us 'against himself' (for himself). So he found nothing in us for the sake of which he predestined us. 6. He has predestined us 'according to the good pleasure of his will' Ephesians 1:5. So this is the cause of predestination,

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not the purpose of our will. 7. God has chosen us 'to the praise of his glorious grace' Ephesians **<AGtG 197>** 1:6.. therefore not for our works' sake, for 'if by grace, it is not for the merit of works', Rom. 11:6. 8. that grace of God is the cause of our election; for it says: 'by which (grace) God has made us acceptable in the Beloved', his Son, Ephes. 1-6 But this favor is based entirely on grace. 9. God has so chosen us from eternity as to bless us in time in Christ, Ephesians 1:4. Now we are blessed in time by mere and free grace. Justification does not depend on the merit of works, therefore neither does election. Neither works before justification nor works after justification can be the cause of election; the former not because works do not please God before God pleases the person; the latter also not because those works are gifts of grace, not merits of grace." (*Loc. de elect. § 193*.)

Gerhard rightly calls the first chapter of the letter to the Ephesians the seat of the doctrine of election. There is no doctrine belonging to it that is not expressed here. Whereas elsewhere in Scripture we only find individual parts of it, here the whole doctrine is dealt with. Gerhard also states the important proposition that we are chosen just as God blesses us in time. He also rightly concludes that since good works are wrought by God, they cannot be a cause in man that moved God to choose us. We can speak of two kinds of works of man, namely those which he does before his conversion and those which he does after it. Now one might think that these are indeed dead works, for they do not come from faith, they are like water flowing from a poisonous spring; but those which come from faith and are done in love may well be meritorious! But no, even these do not include merit in themselves, and not because God must create them in man by grace. It is true that the good God rewards them, and if we only give a drink of cold water to a thirsty person, it should not remain unrewarded; but it is a reward of grace. The good Lord treats us human beings like a kind father treats his little child, whom he wishes to learn to write beautifully, but who has no desire to do so and keeps throwing away the pen to get rid of the plague. He takes the child on his lap, takes his hand in his own and writes. Then he says to the child, "How beautifully you have written, and you have five cents for it. The child is quite happy, partly about the reward, partly about the beautiful writing he has done, and is now learning to write diligently. Hasn't the father paid for what he himself has done? This is exactly what the good Lord does with us poor people. He leads us by the hand, makes beautiful writing, and pays us for it. Oh, what love, what fatherly kindness!

Let us now listen to a few more passages that contain the antithesis:

Thus speaks the Council of Trent in its resolutions, to which every Roman priest is bound, and from which he may not depart under the pope's ban and curse:

"If anyone says ... that the justified man by the good works done by him through the grace of God and the merit of Jesus Christ, of whom he is a living member, does not truly merit ... eternal life and, provided he passes away in grace, the attainment of the same eternal life ... let him be accursed!" (*Sess*. VI.)

Truly, only the Antichrist could have written such terrible things. Just listen: Whoever does not teach that eternal life is earned through good works is to be accursed! One would almost think that the pope understands something else by the word merit than is usually understood by it; but that the word should be taken in its proper sense and not in another, he himself thought he had to see to that, for he says: "truly merited", and also adds the word **<AGtG 198>** "attainment". Who does not shudder to think that a man dares to pronounce a curse on those who reject this accursed and damned doctrine, which overthrows the whole Gospel? The Council adds the words "grace of God" and "merit of Christ", but why? To maintain the appearance of Christianity. But this means nothing other than: Christ must help us a little, so that we may be a little better off. Consider also the good works which the Pope demands of all: chiefly St. Peter's penny, ample payment of the sacrifice of the Mass, building churches, bringing money to the priests, etc. That one loves his brother, fulfills his calling faithfully, etc., these good works are not taught by the papists, no one asks them about them; but how much have you had Masses said? how much have you given to St. Peter's penny? these are the important questions of the soul, and according to them it is judged whether one goes to heaven or not.

The scholastic Gabriel Biel had already written earlier: "Some are predestined because God foresees in them the good use of their free will and their merits; the predestination of others has no cause or no complete reason, because some are ordained to eternal life by a special grace, so that they are not left to themselves, but by virtue of the grace that precedes them cannot put a stop to it and cannot sin or remain in sin, like the Blessed Virgin, Paul; in these it is not due to the good use of free will, because grace has preceded the use of free will." (*1 Sent. dist. 41. q. un. urt. 2*. cited by Gerhard in *Conf. cath. fol. 1421*.)

Much therefore means: The ordinary Christian is saved because the

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dear God has foreseen the good use of his free will from eternity. Only that God has also chosen certain persons for a special glory is said to have happened at best by free grace. Mary, for example, certainly could not have earned it with her good works that she became the Mother of God; nor did Paul earn it with his works that he became such a great apostle; these are cases where one must admit that the good Lord did something else. Finally he writes

Bellarmin: "Eternal election can be considered in two ways: first, insofar as it is the intention to give salvation; second, insofar as it is the mode of execution of the intention and, as it were, the consummation in God's heart. In the first way, election is a matter of mere grace and does not require the foreknowledge of works; in the other way, it requires the foreknowledge of works in advance, for God did not arrange it so that he would give eternal life as a reward, except to those of whom he foreknew that they would do good." (*De gratia et lib. arb. L. 2. c. 14. col. 627.*)

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b. Man's right use of the means of grace.

It is strange that man does not wish to accept the doctrine that he is saved by grace alone. When he hears this, he should rejoice and say: Oh yes, it cannot be otherwise; how could I be saved if it were not by grace? But Satan has so blinded poor fallen man that when God holds out the hand of salvation to him, he does not want to take it, but says: "Oh no, eternal life is something far too great, far too glorious for us not to have to do very much to attain it. Yes, how often has it sounded in our hearts: How? are you to be saved, eternally saved, while others perish? what have you done to deserve this? are you not just as great a sinner as others, indeed even greater? No, you cannot get heaven and its salvation, for you have absolutely nothing to show for it. But what satanic delusion this is! For the greater the good that God wants to give us, the more certain it is that we cannot earn it; precisely because we are dealing here with a good that cannot be comprehended in its greatness and glory, it cannot be otherwise: it must be given to us by free grace. Suppose a beggar comes to me and tells me that a rich, benevolent gentleman has given him a large farm worth many thousands of thalers. I say to him: I can hardly believe that he has given you this great gift. He replies: "Indeed, he didn't give it to me for nothing: I had an old, worn-out, dirty coat, which he asked us to give him in return. But the prophet expressly says that all our righteousness is like a filthy garment, and for this filthy

garment should God give us the great, blessed heaven? Does no man believe that that gracious Lord sold his great farm for a few rags, and do we want to believe that God would sell us the glorious farm of heavenly paradise for the filthy skirt of our righteousness? No, the good Lord is not a miserable shopkeeper who pays cash for rags, and what kind of cash? — Eternal life, the eternal blessed beholding of His glory in the fellowship of all angels and the elect! Oh, it is a crazy thought, which only the devil can put into a man's heart, that man can acquire salvation by his own works.

Therefore, the right use of the means of grace cannot possibly be a reason for man's election. Even the ungodly use them; then they too, when they go to church, read the Bible, pray their morning and evening blessings, would have to go to heaven because of this. A godless person can perhaps read God's Word more diligently than a Christian. How many hypocrites there are who study the Scriptures diligently solely to satisfy their pride, to boast of their great knowledge of the Scriptures, or perhaps to base their sectarian opinions on them, while perhaps a good Christian, who is overburdened with earthly business when he comes home tired and weary in the evening, can only read a little in God's Word to strengthen his poor soul! Even the wicked Herod liked to listen to John the Baptist, whom he had executed, so he was a diligent and willing hearer of the divine word, and yet he went to hell. But if anyone should say, "Yes, but the wicked do not use the means of grace properly, for they lack faith; but the pious use them properly," we would answer: True, but where does it come from that the pious do this? it is only because God has given them faith; therefore it is God alone who gives them the right use of the means of grace. Read the passage we have quoted:

Acts. 16:14: "And a godly woman, named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, was listening; to whom the Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul." **<AGtG 200>**

The Holy Spirit Himself testifies that if He had not opened Lydia's heart, it would have helped her as little as the others to hear God's word. Hence Heb. 4:2: "The word of preaching did not help those who did not believe when they heard it." The salutary hearing of the Word of God is hearing in faith; but only God can give this; therefore the use of the means of grace on my part cannot be a cause for the dear God to save me or to choose me for salvation. As soon as a person goes to church with the intention of hearing God's Word for his salvation,

he is already converted. No unconverted person does that. Rather, he thinks: It is Sunday, I must go to church, otherwise people will not consider me a Christian, otherwise God will not take me to heaven. But he doesn't go in with the thought: I want to hear my God speak so that I can receive the answer to the question: What must I do to be saved? Oh, if people all went to church with a real desire to be saved, what fruit we preachers would see! We would be amazed that soon not a single one of our listeners would be an unchristian. Many say it with their mouths and think it with their minds that what is preached to them is God's word, but the thought does not live in their hearts: Now I want to receive what God says to me with a fine good heart. That is why many people often say after the sermon that they did not like it, even though they cannot say that it was not God's word. Yes, the fact that you did not like it is not because there was nothing in it, but because you took nothing out of it! God's word remains God's word, and therefore always has its saving power, even if it had been spoken to you with a stammering mouth and slurred lips. He who comes to the table hungry will be refreshed by a little food, if only it satisfies him. But he will always receive the bread of life who has a believing preacher, especially an orthodox one. How wonderful it is that David cries out so imploringly to God: "Open my eyes that I may see the wonders of your law"! This old hero of God, who was himself the most glorious channel through which God revealed his precious word to the poor world, is on his knees pleading like this; what can be said of an unconverted man? Paul says: "The natural man hears nothing of the Spirit of God" etc.; as long as the Holy Spirit has not yet worked on a person and he listens to the Word of God, he thinks: what the preacher is saying cannot be true. Only when God opens his eyes, only then does everything appear to him as divine wisdom, as divine power. Even an unconverted person can dissect the doctrine of faith with his mind, but he talks about it like a blind man talks about color; he has tightly closed eyes and does not understand a word of what he says. The blind can also describe a color, and can even distinguish one from another by their feelings; but they know nothing of it, for color is not a matter of feeling, but of sight. In the same way, for example, the love of God is nothing more to the unconverted than a benevolence towards men. But once he has experienced it in his heart, once it has dawned on him in a blessed hour of grace that he is a completely lost and damned man, but that God has also looked down on him with eternal mercy, only then does he

know what this means: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son" and so on. Ah, he then thinks, is it possible that God loved the world and therefore also me, **<AGtG 201>** the most wretched, the most unworthy, the most rejected of all men? Now he understands the word love, of which he had previously spoken like a star.

In addition, there are other important reasons that our theologians cite. Thus writes Joh. Olearius: "Is the doctrine of the Lutherans related to Pelagianism? — This is denied (in the Formula of Concord), because it ascribes everything to God and nothing to man, since He alone gives the willing and accomplishing, Phil. 2, 14. This is not opposed by: 1. the external hearing of the Word, because the acts of external tugging (*paedagogicae*) are quite different from conversion and salutary hearing." (*Carpzovii Isag. in libb. symb. a J. Oleario contin. Lips. 1675. p. 1684. sq.*)

From the beginning the Calvinists reproached the Lutherans with Pelagianism, because they teach that man is rejected by God solely because of his sin and persistent impenitence, but not because of an eternal decree. They said: "There you stand, the Lutherans ascribe the power to convert oneself to man." But there is no need to prove how wrong they are.

John Gerard also writes: "Although God, according to his ordinary way of working, does not convert those who do not hear the Word, who despise and persecute the preachers of the Word, and who blaspheme the Word and resist the Holy Spirit, it does not follow from this that it depends on man that he is converted, since it is the work of the Holy Spirit, not of human powers, that man is converted by hearing the Word. What removes an obstacle is not the same as an active cause." (*Loc. de elect. § 188.*)

e. Man's own decision.

Many say that man is saved because he chooses salvation. Therefore God also chose him, because he foresaw from eternity that he would choose salvation. In all the books of the newer so-called believing theologians this doctrine is expressed or at least spouted. They say: It goes without saying that if a person does not choose heaven, he cannot enter it. If he chooses it, then God says to him, as it were: That is right, my son; now I will also take you into my heaven. They refer to such passages where it is written: I set before you death and life, choose! From this one can see, they say, that one must choose among the ways; whoever chooses the right way will be saved; whoever

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chooses the wrong way will be damned; it is therefore up to the individual to decide for himself. Man should be the architect of his own happiness. They mainly refer to the example of Adam and Eve; they should have made their own decision: if they had chosen good, they would have been eternally saved; but they chose evil, and so they plunged into damnation. But did not the good Lord give the first human beings a free will that was not hindered by anything? They were therefore able to decide for themselves. But now it is different. **<AGtG 202>** We have fallen and are by nature in the power of the devil, bound hand and foot. We can choose nothing for ourselves but evil, and therefore only the wrong way, which leads to damnation. We must first become new men again in order to acquire a liberated will; a self-decision on our part is therefore out of the question. Note once again that Holy Scripture portrays the unconverted as dead in sin, Ephesians 2:1 and 5. Is it not ridiculous to say: "If a dead person is to become alive, he must first decide whether he wants to become alive or not"? Did the Lord call out to Lazarus: "Lazarus, I will make you alive; decide whether you want to become alive or whether you want to remain in the grave!"? No; Lazarus could not even hear such a call before his awakening, how could he decide for himself? Rather, the Savior decided for himself by calling out to him: "Lazarus, come out!" It is the same with conversion. If a person is to come from death to life, someone else, namely his Creator, must come to him and decide for him; he cannot do it himself. The newer theologians who want to be believers also see this; that is why they have invented another theory, which is just as contradictory. They say: It is true that man cannot decide by his own powers; but God gives him these powers, and now he can decide with the powers given to him by God. Many who do not see clearly allow themselves to be seduced by this new appearance. But just think what foolishness it is to say that God gives a dead person the powers of life so that he can resurrect himself! As soon as a person has vital powers, he is already alive; he would therefore have to be converted so that he could be converted; he would have to be awakened so that he could be awakened. Just imagine that dead people receive powers with which they now walk around as dead people. If one calls out to such living dead people: Are you not dead? how can you walk around? they answer: Of course I am dead, but I have received powers which I should use to choose life for myself, then I will become alive. And how? If such a person dies before the supposed self-decision, where does he

end up? He is not dead, he is not alive either; so he seems to have to hover between heaven and hell; or does he end up in the place of the middle state, in a "Hades"? — Alas, if reason thinks it has produced a high wisdom, and has not drawn it from the Scriptures, it must at last see how its wisdom is vain foolishness. The powers of life are not in man like undigested food, which only gives man strength and blood after it has been digested; but if he has vitality, he is also alive; and if he is alive, he is also converted. It is wrong to make such a distinction between being converted and being awakened. It is indeed possible that the good God may so beat a man by the law that he can no longer sin quietly, but is punished continually by his accuser, who dwells in him as often as he sins; who gets up with him and goes to bed with him, whose punishment he may even seek to escape by going to the drinking house and trying to drown his restlessness; but such a man is not awakened, he is merely startled. He who is truly awakened has come from death to life; Christ has become his life. **<AGtG 203>**

The passage quoted here in Phil. 2:13: "It is God who works in you both to will and to do, according to his good pleasure" also destroys the doctrine of man's self-decision. The decision for what is right is nothing other than that I will what is right. If God creates the will, this means nothing other than that He decides for us and not we. But did God decide to make me blessed because He foresaw that He wanted to work a will in me? No, the opposite is true: because God has decided to save me, He works the will, i.e. the decision, in me. The Scripture says: "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature." But has any creature decided to be created? No, for it was not in its power to will anything until it was created. In the new birth God gives us a new heart, a new mind, not in number (for he does not take out my mind and put in another mind, as the dentist puts in a new tooth, but leaves the same mind, the same will in man), but he gives the mind, the will new qualities and powers. That God gives a different mind, a different heart, that was the fallacy of the Lacanians. Since our conversion is really a creation, a birth, a begetting on the part of God, it is clear that man cannot decide for himself.

Our fathers also testify to this.

Thus Dannhauer writes: "Even the decision of our will in the first act of conversion has always been attributed by orthodox believers not to the power and cooperation of man, but to the Holy Spirit, who works on the will through the Word, which

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behaves inactively in the process. And yet this decision is not a matter of necessity and an irresistible force, although it is infallible, assuming divine order. For God has bound Himself by the most certain and holy promises that He will Himself decide the man to conversion, if he is in the workshop of the Holy Spirit and does not maliciously resist the means of salvation." (Cited in Calov's *Systema X, 50*.)

With clear words Dannhauer here attributes the decision to the Holy Spirit and expressly describes the will of man as an inactive one, only as the object of the Spirit's activity. He is therefore only acting in a spiritual way. But Dannhauer also rejects the error of the Calvinists. They also say that the Holy Spirit decides man, but they add: "By an irresistible power." When grace comes, they teach, a person cannot resist it, he cannot resist it, God compels him to believe. But this is a dangerous teaching, for we read many times in Holy Scripture that people have resisted when grace was offered to them. We are even worse than a stone or a block, teaches the Formula of Concord. For if a stonemason strikes the marble with a good instrument, he can hew as much of it as he likes; the marble does nothing to help, but also nothing against it when it is hewn. But not only can man do nothing to teach himself, he also has the terrible power to resist, and we all do this when God wants to convert us. But we must distinguish between **<AGtG 204>** natural and willful, malicious, stubborn resistance. God "takes away" the latter; but as long as we remain in the latter, we will not be converted.

When the syncretists of Helmstadt had once put forward the doctrine of man's self-determination by means of certain powers given to him, the

Theological Faculty of Jena, among other things: "If one wanted to say that man is converted by the powers of grace, this is also not a sufficiently convenient way of speaking. For since conversion in this sense means nothing other than to be endowed with new powers, which happens through enlightenment of the mind and conversion of the will, it cannot be said that man is converted through the powers he has already received. For these powers are not given beforehand so that man may be converted afterwards through them, but the gift of spiritual powers is in fact the conversion itself." (Citirt von Quenstedt in his *Theologia* II, 727.)

Let us now hear how the newer theologians make the election of man dependent on his own decision.

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Thus Kahnis writes: "Accordingly, predestination is conditioned by prescience (foreknowledge), prescience by man's decision." (op. cit. p. 256.)

Dr. Frank writes: "On the basis of the call given to him, man is able to cooperate with grace" (mitzuwirken) "and to decide for it personally out of himself (*ex se ipso*), so that he himself is the agent and no other, but not as out of himself (*tamquam ex semet ipso*), as if he had this self-acting out of and through himself." (The Theology of the Formula of Concord. IV, 164.)

Luthardt writes: "Man himself must open the door for Jesus to enter him. Ultimately it depends on our own free self-determination, i.e. our own self-determination, whether we want to be determined by the impulses or not." (The doctrine of free will. p. 427. 428.)

If we also examine these words using the example of Lazarus, then we will see how foolish they are. According to Luthardt, the Savior would have said to Lazarus: Lazarus, if you throw off the lid, I will make you alive. If he had been able to speak, he would have said: I cannot throw off the lid, for I am dead! Of course, the Lord says in Rev. 3:20: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and take communion with him, and he with me"; but he does not mean that we can open the door ourselves. The Scriptures say again and again that we should "be converted, that we should believe, that we should walk in newness of life". But by this it does not at all say that we men can do this ourselves, but it only says that this is necessary; and now a poor sinner should despair of himself and learn to recognize that he cannot do what he ought, and when such a man reads the Gospel, he finds that God wants to give him all this. **<AGtG 205>** Thus the Lord had already spoken in the same chapter, v. 7: "Thus says the Holy One, the True One, who has the key of David, who opens and no one shuts, who shuts and no one shuts." So God alone can open the door of our heart; if He does not do so, He can knock for all eternity, we do not open it; if we could speak as spiritually dead, we would only keep saying: Lord, I cannot open it for you. But as soon as we believe through God's gift, the Lord opens the door of our heart and comes to us with his heavenly splendor and takes communion with us. By nature we are all imprisoned as in a terrible castle dungeon, where our feet are bound in sticks and iron and our hands are bound with heavy chains, and the heavy dungeon door is locked with a huge lock and bolt.

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Then a dear friend comes to visit me in my misery, and says: Open up, I want to see you! I have to answer him: Oh, great as my joy would be to see you, I cannot open the door; go to the doorkeeper, he has the key; if he does not open it, I can never see you. How terrible, therefore, are such doctrines as Luthardt here sets forth! Suppose a poor, afflicted man were to come to such a professor and complain to him of his distress, that he felt nothing of the grace of God in his heart: what answer would he receive? This: Yes, my dear man, you must open the door of your heart to the Lord Jesus! And what would be the result? The troubled person would only leave his teacher in all the greater sorrow, for he would think: "That is precisely my need, that my heart is closed! How differently, on the other hand, will a true Lutheran theologian treat him! He will say to him: Oh, my dear fellow, the Lord Jesus has long been in you, you just do not feel him; for how would it be possible for you to long for him so much, to sigh and cry out for him so much, if you did not love him! But you cannot love him if you do not have him. Therefore be of good cheer, the door of your heart has long since been opened wide for him, the Lord has long since entered your heart; only recognize that he is with you.

d. Man's desire and prayer.

Many also consider this to be the reason for which God has chosen man. The sects in particular say that only those are converted who awaken a strong desire for it in themselves and earnestly seek it in their prayers. As is well known, this is the Alpha and Omega of all their doctrinal presentations. If you ask them: What must I do to be saved? they answer: "You must pray until you hear a voice in your heart that says to you: Now you have grace, now you have forgiveness of sins, because you now feel Jesus living in you." But a very sad teaching! For now a person may well be struggling in earnest prayer and have the feeling that Jesus dwells in him, that he is pardoned, and tomorrow all this may be over; then he feels nothing but darkness and death. Once he has received this teaching, he must think: I have fallen away again. As proof of this, one of those present [at the conference] told the following example from his life:

When I was a student, I read almost nothing but Methodist writings, and I struggled miserably for more than two years to be sure of my salvation. I always did not fully feel what those writings demanded. Once **<AGtG 206>** I read in a book by Bogatzky, entitled "Die geistlichen Friedensstörer" (The spiritual disturbers of peace), a lengthy passage written in true evangelical style, which enticed the poor sinner to go to Jesus as he is and removed all his reservations about doing so. Then I was really filled with an exuberant

feeling of joy, so that I thought: Praise God, now you have come through, now you have grace, now God himself has spoken in you, he has accepted you, your sins are forgiven, you are saved! In this great joy I immediately wrote to my brother and told him what the Lord had done for me. It was Pentecost time. He soon replied and congratulated me on the rich Pentecostal blessing I had received. But when I received the letter, lo and behold, the feeling of grace had long since vanished again; the next day I had already lost it again. The next day I had read the book again. But after Bogatzky had spoken so comfortingly, he continued: "But, dear reader, be careful! One can easily deceive oneself and think it is the voice of grace, and yet it is not." I felt as if I had a light in my hand and someone came and blew it out for me. I felt as if I had fallen from a dreamed-of heaven and plunged into hell. This was the result of the false teaching that man's desire, prayer, feelings, sensations and the like are what the certainty of his salvation rests on.

No human being can generate the right desire for salvation in himself, only God can do that. This is what the passage teaches:

Romans 9:16: "So then it does not depend on anyone's willing or running, but on God's mercy."

It is true: all people want to be blessed by nature; but what kind of bliss do they want? One that does not exist. An unconverted person does not want to be truly saved, for he does not want to be free from his sin, from his enmity against God, he does not want to come into fellowship with God, he does not long to see God face to face; he just does not want to go to hell, but to a place where he has no punishment to suffer and where all his natural inclinations are satisfied. Only when the Holy Spirit works in us the desire for salvation, only then do we have it; we see this from Romans 8:26: the longing, the desire, the sighing and the prayer that follows must all be worked in us by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, this cannot be the cause that would have moved God to determine us to salvation, for He did it Himself.

The Formula of Concord says about this longing: "Paul (writes) Phil. 2: 'It is God who works in you both to will and to do according to his good pleasure'. This sweet saying is very comforting to all pious Christians who feel and sense a little spark and longing for God's grace and eternal salvation in their hearts, that they may know that God has kindled this beginning of true godliness in their hearts, and may continue to strengthen them **<AGtG 207>** in their great weakness and help them to persevere in true faith to the end." (Repetition. Art. 2. p. 591 [FC SD II, 14])

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A true masterpiece of right, evangelical consolation, which every preacher should take as a model! It is not uncommon for such afflicted people to come to us complaining that they must be lost because they cannot believe. They say: The Bible says: "He who does not believe shall be condemned"; and no matter how earnestly we try to persuade these poor people to believe with confidence, they keep saying: I can't believe, I can't believe. So you have to ask them: Don't you long to be able to believe? They will answer: Oh of course I long for it! That is precisely my need, that is why I have no rest day and night, that is why I come to you, so that you can help me out of this need. Then we should say to them: Well, my dear fellow, be of good cheer, you are already in the faith; for it is impossible for me to long for the faith without already believing. Who on earth would want to believe something to be true that he believes to be a lie? So whoever desires to believe must already have faith in his heart, he must already be convinced that the gospel is truth, which is what faith is. Oh, how faithfully God has cared for his children! No matter how badly they are afflicted, there is always comfort for them. According to God's Word, I should not think: May I also accept the comfort of the gospel, unfaithful man that I am? Oh, who would the good Lord want to take to heaven if he only wanted to accept the faithful into it? Then heaven should remain completely empty, for we all should and must say: We are useless servants. It is just God's good pleasure to populate heaven with sinners, and yet the holy angels need not be ashamed to associate with us unclean ones, for God adorns us with the white robe of the righteousness of his dear Son, which shines brighter than the righteousness of the angels. How wrong it is, therefore, when legalistic preachers say: "If you want to come to faith, you must wrestle for it in prayer until you have it", since the unbeliever is not yet able to wrestle at all! No, we should indeed wrestle, struggle, groan and pray, but not so that we may receive faith, but when we have believed, so that we may not lose the faith we have received. So we must not think that this teaching, that God alone must kindle faith in us, will make people indifferent to prayer; oh no! whoever is seized by God's word and then does not want to pray will soon lose everything again. When faith is born in the heart, it is still such a small, tender, weak child that it needs the most careful care; it is like a tiny light that must be protected from the stormy wind so that it does not go out. Therefore, as soon as a person has heard God's Word and he decides to convert because God has worked this decision in him,

such a convert must of course immediately fall to his knees and pray and fight and struggle until his blessed death. Whoever does not struggle and pray for just one day will come back. We have to deal with our wretched flesh and blood again and again and must lament to God with shame and remorse that we are still such wretched creatures after He has shown us such unspeakable mercy. That is why our sermons often have so little effect, not because they do not reach many people — oh no! if we preach rightly, then there will usually be a whole crowd of listeners who receive a blow to the heart, as we see in the people in the Gospels; — but most of them, as soon as they have left the church, then talk again about things of this world, and **<AGtG 208>** when they come home, there is no more talk of the sermon; at most, they say: that was a beautiful sermon, and that is all the fruit. But why is it that all impressions of the divine word vanish so quickly? It is because everything we receive must be preserved by praying, sighing and crying out to God. "Blessed are those," says the Lord, "who hear the word of God and keep it." As terrible as it is when a preacher says: You must first soften the dear God through your weeping, praying and wrestling so that he forgives your sins — for God has long since been softened through the weeping, crying and bloodshed of his Son — it is just as important that we exhort those who have received the first beginnings of faith to pray and wrestle so that they do not lose grace again. The younger and newer the faith is, the more anxiously the tender little plant must be watered. When the Lord wanted to convince Ananias that Saul had really converted, he called out to the former: "For behold, he is praying." Acts 9, 11.

Let us now listen to another testimony from John Olearius on this part of our thesis. He writes: "The doctrine of the Lutherans... ascribes everything to God, nothing to man. This is not contradicted by: . . 3. the desire for salvation, because this too is not a natural, but a supernatural one, given by the Holy Spirit and arising from the Word.... . Nor 5. prayer, and perseverance therein in the agony of death; for this also the Holy Spirit awakens in us, Rom. 8." (*L. c. p. 1684. sq.*)

*) e. The non-resistance of man.

*) Here follows the minutes of Mr. Pastor Hein of the 8th session, which concludes the proceedings on this Thesis III.D. S.

We now come to the 5th part, which some explain as the reason why one part of mankind is chosen to eternal salvation, while the other part is rejected. Those who place very little emphasis

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on man say that the real cause is that there are a number of people who do not resist maliciously, and because they do not resist maliciously, God has chosen them. This indeed sounds as if it were an excellent solution to the question. Unfortunately, however, it is not. In this way, the reason for blessedness would be written to man. For if my non-resistance is the ultimate and actual reason, then I would actually be my Savior, my Redeemer, my Savior, and on the Last Day I could call out to those who then stand on the left hand of the Lord: You too could stand on the right, could be as blessed as I am, if only you had done as I have done. I have not resisted. But no! it will not be so; rather we will confess that we have been saved only by grace, by God's free mercy. That is why we sing:

It is the eternal mercy that surpasses all thought,
It is the open arms of love of him who leans towards the sinner,
Whose heart always breaks, we come or we don't come. [TLH 385:2]

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Yes, yes, Holy Scripture gives us no other solution than: "It is the eternal mercy that surpasses all thinking", which also opens the arms of its eternal love to us wicked sinners.

It is certainly true that willful rebellion is the cause of people being condemned. For example, we read in Matthew 23:37 that the Savior says: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those who are sent to you! How often have I desired to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing." But what does this mean other than: you have striven as He strives? The Savior says that He willed, but they did not. He not only willed it in his heart, no, he also proved his right will, lured them as a mother hen lures her chicks. It was as in the Gospel of the XX Sunday after Trinity; all were invited, seriously invited, the call went out to all: "Everything is ready, come to the wedding"; "but", it says, "they did not want to come", so they resisted. We read the same thing in Acts 7:51, where Stephen says to the high council: "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit, as your fathers did, so do you." And Acts. 13:45-46. it says: "But when the Jews saw the people, they were filled with envy, and contradicted and blasphemed what was said by Paul. But Paul and Barnabas said freely in public, "The word of God must first have been spoken to you; but now that you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles." The Jews thought: we are the chosen people; how can they preach salvation and blessedness to the Gentiles? we have been promised this. Pharisees still often say this today: Oh, I don't like to go to church;

there are abominable people there, people who have lived in all sins, and there they are absolved, and then they are suddenly considered saints. That is why the Savior said that fornicators and publicans go to heaven rather than such Pharisees. The Jews rejected the word and willfully resisted it. This is certainly true: people are lost because of willful, stubborn resistance, but others are not saved because they did not resist. Those who do not resist are saved, but the question is whether the cause of salvation lies in man, so that one can say: Behold, he did not resist, therefore the cause is not in God, but in man. But even though opposition is in man, non-opposition is not in any man. God must first plant it in him. He must turn man's will around. That is why we speak of conversion.

We see this in all the passages of Holy Scripture in which conversion is ascribed to God, e.g.

Jer 31:18: "Convert thou me, and I shall be converted: for thou, O Lord, art my God."

Isaiah 63:17: "Why hast thou caused us to err from thy ways, O Lord, and hardened our hearts, that we should not fear thee? Return for the sake of your servants, for the sake of the tribes of your inheritance.

This sounds as if the prophet is blaming God for the apostasy; but it only sounds that way. He wants to say: We cannot help but resist; oh, therefore take this resistance away from us! The words: "Why do you harden our hearts?" are not an accusation against **<AGtG 210>** God, but rather a bitter complaint about the state of the people at that time. Oh, he wants to say, what wretched people we are, we cannot take away our reluctance, only you can. If you do not take it away, we will become more and more hardened.

Furthermore, Ezek. 11:19: "And I will give you one heart, and put a new spirit within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your body, and give you a heart of flesh." So God wants to take away the heart that resists, that hardens. If he does not, we keep the same.

A remarkable example is that of the apostle Paul. To him the Lord says in Acts 9:5: "It will be hard for you to resist the thorn." He wants to say: "You have now been a tool of the devil against me and my church; but I have decided to put a stop to you. You shall not strike out, you shall not resist. When plowing, farmers had a plow like this, with goads attached to it to discourage the animals from striking while plowing. The Savior wants to say: I will see to it that you do not strike it, you will feel the thorn. That was nothing other than his great grace and mercy that overcame him.

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Before, he snorted with murder; but no sooner had the Lord spoken these words than this lion, this wolf, became a gentle lamb. All Christendom was astonished at this. Everyone shook their heads, thinking that this was not possible, that such an enemy of Christ could not be converted. Even Ananias, whom God commanded to baptize him, could not understand it. He refused, for he thought he would have him seized and brought to trial. That is why God adds: "Behold, he prayeth!" The Savior wants to say: This is a certain sign that he has been converted.

But what has happened in us? Can anyone say: Yes, I am a Christian, because I have not resisted? Alas, no! We must say: I have resisted all my days, all my days I have wanted to flee from God, but he has followed me. When I wanted to leave him, he knocked on my door, sweet and friendly, but often also terrible and threatening. So I had to give myself up. — Our heart always wants to resist, but God makes sure that it is broken. Alas, everyone would have to speak against his conscience if he wanted to deny his reluctance. Everyone sees every day what a rebellious heart he has. How often have we stood on the brink of destruction and He has pulled us back again and again. It is He who has begun the good work; He must also complete it.

The non-resistance of man cannot be a reason that lies in man; for Christians do good works, make up their minds, have a fervent desire for salvation, pray, do not resist; but these are all effects of God, all causes that lie not in them but in God.

Our old teachers also taught this.

Thus John Olearius writes: "The teaching of the Lutherans ... ascribes everything to God and nothing to man. This is not contradicted ... 4. non-resistance, because even this is a gift of the Holy Spirit, who removes and restrains the resistance that is ours alone through the proper means of salvation. For non-resistance is by no means a causative influence, but only a non-prevention of the activity of an agent; just as both the leper **<AGtG 211>** Matthew 8 and Lazarus John 11, by not resisting Christ, were by no means the cause of the miraculous healing or resurrection." (*L. c. p. 1684. s.*)

God restrains the reluctance in us, although he does not completely abolish it until death; otherwise we would not always have to lament with the apostle: "What I do not want, I do." Resistance is always present with us until we are redeemed from the body of this death. Our not resisting does not matter at all. Someone who is ill may do nothing at all and lie down quietly, but that is not why he is

found. If, of course, he rages, rages and eats and drinks all sorts of things, he may catch his death. But the fact that he does nothing does not make him well. God must not only take away our resistance, he must also come with the medicine of the gospel and make us righteous and saved. That is why Lazarus did not come to life, because he did not resist. He could not have done so. Suddenly he was alive and did not know what had happened to him. It is the same with everyone who comes to spiritual life. He must say: God has done this! What has happened to me has only held me back and hindered me.

Hülsemann writes: "Non-resistance is by no means our work, but a work of God produced in us, which we can only resist." (*Vindiciae p. 158*.)

Hollaz writes: "Non-malicious resistance means either the omission of a resistance that resists the outward use of the means of grace".

The Pharisees, for example, already resisted the outward use of the word. They avoided the Lord and did not want to hear him. They could have refrained from this outward resistance; they did not need the Holy Spirit for this. They could have gone once and heard the Lord, just as the ungodly still speak today: You must go to church, see and hear what is there. God will meet such a person and convert him.

Hollaz continues: "or the omission of a reluctance that resists the inward grace of conversion. The latter omission is a matter of free will; the latter is due to divine grace, which takes away the stony heart." (*Examen theol. P. III. s. 1. c. 1. q. 9. p. 602*.)

Every man has so much strength by nature that he can say: I will go to church, or not; I will read the Bible, or not; I will be baptized, or not. But that is not what conversion is all about. I can do all that and still be and remain a godless person. This is only due to divine grace. The Pharisees did not refrain from resisting inward grace; they maliciously resisted it and went to hell. If a person refrains from doing so, he owes it to divine grace alone.

f. The faith of man.

Now we come to the last point, for the sake of which some say that, after all, everything depends on man's decision, namely that he must believe. Faith, they say, is the reason why a number of people are chosen and saved, while unbelief is the reason why others are not saved, for we read in the Holy Scriptures: "He that believeth shall be saved"; and just as God acts in time,

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so he has decided to act in eternity; we human beings often intend to do something, but often decide otherwise; it is not so with God; he is **<AGtG 212>** omniscience and eternally perfect wisdom; he knows everything beforehand and is so all-wise that he decides everything that he actually does in time. "You see," they say, "since man is saved by faith now, God must have decided in eternity to save man for the sake of faith." They seem to be speaking quite correctly, and yet they are not speaking correctly. Nowhere in Holy Scripture does it say that we are saved because of faith, that we are justified and saved because we believe. Nothing of the kind is to be found; but it says that we are justified and saved by faith. So we see that Holy Scripture does not make faith the cause of justification, but the means of it. We admit that God has determined from eternity to save a person by bringing him to faith, thereby justifying him and allowing him to attain the end of faith, the salvation of souls. But to be saved by faith means nothing other than to be saved by grace. Whoever says that he is saved by faith is either mistaken or does not know what he is talking about. It is by no means to be understood as if God had decided that those who are so pious that they believe everything he has said in the Bible should now also go to his heaven for it. The unbelievers so often say: "Oh, what a doctrine that is! what can God care that we believe all that! we can't believe for once.j Are we to be damned because of that and are others, who are no better than we are, to go to heaven just because they believe that?" But if that were the case, faith would be nothing but a work, and it would be strange that it should count for so much before God, more than all other works. No, we are saved by faith because God has already redeemed the whole world, the Son has reconciled us with the Father, purchased righteousness for us, and bought us salvation. Everything is already there. Nothing, not even the slightest thing, remains to be done on our part. "Come to the wedding," God calls out to us, "everything is ready." God says: "You guests, just come, you don't need to bring anything, neither food nor drink; you will even be given a dress. — If Christ has done everything, what else do we have to do? Nothing, nothing at all. Whether I tell someone to whom I have explained the counsel of God that he should do nothing, but only accept it, or that he should be saved by faith, is one and the same thing. For to be saved by faith means: to accept what God has acquired and wants to give you, to rejoice in it, to place your trust in it. This is the miracle doctrine of Christianity. This is the secret that was hidden in the heart of God and was revealed through the mouth

of the prophets and apostles. Only he who believes: I am also redeemed, also reconciled, I am righteous, will be saved and no one else. Only through faith, not for the sake of faith, are we saved. Faith only takes. It is the beggar's hand that gives us eternal love in the first place.

The following objection was made here: How should we answer someone who concludes: "God sees nothing in election but the merit of Jesus Christ, not in abstracto, but in so far as someone has grasped it; so he has seen that someone accepts the merit of Christ by faith, and therefore he is elected"? To this we should reply: "Behold, my beloved, the wedding garment God puts on us. He foresaw that he would put it on us and give us faith. How can this be a reason that lies in man? Rather, it is a **<AGtG 213>** reason that lies in God. If he did not give us faith, we would not have it. God has included faith in the counsel of election; faith is part of the golden chain that God has forged, so to speak, with which he draws me out of hell and away from earth into heaven. The first is that he chose me; the second, that he created me; the third, that he redeemed me; the fourth, that he made me believe; the fifth, that he preserves me; the sixth, that he introduces me to eternal life.

Here belong all the passages which testify that faith is not our work, e.g.

Col 2:12: "In whom ye are buried with him by baptism; in whom also ye are risen by the faith which God hath wrought." There it is most clearly stated: It is God who works faith, not I.

John 6:44-45 also belongs here: "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets: They will all be taught by God. Whoever therefore hears from the Father and learns it will come to me." These are two beautiful sayings. First it is said: The Father must draw us, so we cannot give ourselves faith. But then it is added: Whoever hears from the Father and learns, comes to me. So if I reject the word of the gospel, the Father does not draw me. He only deals with us through the word. But whoever needs the word can be sure that the Father will draw him to the Son and give him faith.

Furthermore, Heb. 12:2: "And look to Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith." Here we hear both: first he begins faith, then he also perfects it; he alone sustains us in faith.

Furthermore, 1 Cor. 12:3: "Therefore I declare to you that no one curses Jesus who speaks through the Spirit of God; and no one can call Jesus Lord without the Holy Spirit." Calling Jesus a Lord means nothing other than believing in him.

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1 Peter 1:5 reads: "To you who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation prepared for revelation in the last time." It is not by our power, but by God's power that we are preserved, and it is by faith that God wants to preserve us for salvation. From eternity he has included faith as a link in the chain; no one is chosen who does not come to faith. But the fact that a person comes to faith has been planted in him by the hand of eternal love; it has not grown on the soil of his heart.

Phil 1:6 reads: "And I am confident of this very thing, that he who began the good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Jesus Christ." He has begun it. It's not that we have to start it and then God wants to carry it on and help us further. We do not come to him, no! he comes to us; we do not lay the first stone for our salvation, but he does it. Nor is it as if we could not make the beginning, but then, when God has made it, bring it to the end. No, he must make the beginning, the progress and the end, or we are all lost.

Thus our Catechism says: 'I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him." "The kingdom of God comes from Himself without our prayer." **<AGtG 214>**

A few more passages have been collected from the Fathers on this subject, since this teaching is contradicted everywhere. Precisely those who teach that faith is the reason for our election think that they are the most orthodox. But they do not consider that, according to their teaching, faith must be our work. No, it is not our work, but God's. But if it is God's work, it cannot move him to do something that he himself has done.

Gerhard says that God has chosen us in regard to faith. Others have spoken out against this form of expression and said: If it is needed, then it must be explained in more detail. Should it mean as much as: Faith is the moving cause, then it cannot be accepted. But if you want to say: God has not chosen anyone who does not come to faith, then this is correct. Then only the elect are described, but faith should not be the reason for election. The reason for this is Christ alone. If he had not become man, then no man could be chosen, because God cannot forgive sins if they have not been blotted out. He is a righteous judge; he does not acquit the guilty until his debt has been paid. Everyone must have paid his sin debt before he can be acquitted. Since we could not do it ourselves, God did it for us. This is the reason that God can save us, for which he could choose us from eternity.

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Gerhard writes: "We do not say that predestination has its ground in the foreknowledge of faith (*ex praeevisione fidei esse*), but that the intuition of faith (*intuitus fidei*) belongs to the counsel of election. But there is a great difference between these propositions; the former expresses the meritorious or prompting (xxxxxxxxxxxxx) cause, the latter denotes only the order." (*Loc. de dect. § 175.*)

So if one were to say: In the foreknowledge of faith the election of grace has its ground, one would say: faith is the meritorious cause. But Gerhard rejects this with great seriousness as quite false. But if one only wants to say that faith is part of the reason for election, then it is all right. For then it is so. God does not save anyone apart from Christ.

Quenstedt writes: "Faith is not the meritorious cause of election, but.... a part of the order established by God in election. We are not chosen because of, but through and in faith." (*Theol. L. c. fol. 53.*)

God does not say: Such and such a one shall go to heaven, whether he believes or not; but he has woven faith into the whole wreath of our salvation. We are to believe and remain in faith and die and be saved.

Gerhard writes: "We confess with a loud voice that we hold that God found nothing good in the man to be elected to eternal life, that he did not take into account either good works or the use of free will, nor even faith, so that he chose some because he was moved by it or for the sake of it." (*Loc. de elect. et re- prob. § 161.*)

Gerhard further writes: "We do not say that faith is the meritorious or effectual cause of election, or that God chose us for the sake of faith." (*Loc. de elect. § 170.*)

Joh. Olearius writes: **<AGtG 215>** "The doctrine of the Lutherans... ascribes everything to God and nothing to man. This is not contradicted by.... 2. faith, for this is by no means our work, but God's gift, nor is it a condition to be fulfilled by us, but a requirement which is bestowed by God by grace through the ordinary means of salvation." (*L. c. p. 1684.*)

Faith, then, is not a condition under which God would have us saved. It is rather a requirement which God himself wants to fulfill. He wants to make man blessed without condition; but he has made an order in which he wants to carry out this general will. Whoever does not want to submit to this order, but stubbornly resists it, will be lost. But he who allows faith to be generated in him

does nothing himself; God does everything and that makes him blessed.

Quenstedt writes: "The moving cause (of predestination) is partly internal, partly external. The inward cause is God's grace, which is manifested in vain, which absolutely excludes any merit of human works, or anything that has the name of a work or an action, whether it happened by God's grace or by natural forces. For God has not chosen us according to works, but by his mere grace. Nor does faith itself belong here, if it is regarded as a more or less worthy condition (whether in itself or according to an estimate of value added to faith by the will of God), because nothing of this belongs to the counsel of election as a cause that moves and impels God to make such a counsel, but this must be attributed to the pure grace of God. This sentence is first proved from Romans 9:15, 16: "Whom I have mercy on, I have mercy on. So then it is not a matter of someone's willing or running, but of God's mercy.'" (*Th. did.-pol. III,* 255.)

Some say: "We admit that faith in itself is not such a good work that it deserves anything before God. But God in his great goodness has promised salvation to faith." This is not how we should think of faith. It is not a work by which we earn anything; God has not given it any such value out of goodness. It is nothing but a taking. But that has no value. A beggar who takes a gift given to him will not be praised for it. A beggar has to thank the person who gives him a gift, and not the other way round.

The same: "It agrees with the word, that the cause why some believe is not in man, but in God, who gives them faith according to his good pleasure." (*L. c. fol. 59*.)

Calov writes: "It is not because of faith that we are called elect, but through faith in Christ, of which the former is the signifying expression of the moving cause, the latter of the instrumental cause. The blessed Meisner reminds us: 'When faith is called the cause of election, it must not be understood as the moving or impulsive cause. 'For', says Blessed Hutter, 'election does not depend on faith as its moving or meritorious cause'... And blessed Gerard says that it is absurd to say that faith is the moving cause of election." (*Syst. Tom. X., 629*.) **<AGtG 216>**

Dannhauer: "Predestination does not depend on any work, on any merit, on any motive that is from us or through us, that is in us, for the sake of which election would have happened; not on faith, insofar as it is a work or the fruit of faith.

For thus we also say that the decree is a purely gracious one. This graciousness excludes the merits, not the order; faith here is not a work, but the foreknown beggar's hand. Therefore nothing of boast, even the least, is left to faith, in that it takes, not gives or acquires. Therefore God saw nothing of active worthiness in man, nothing good that was not from him, God himself. God remains the cause and never becomes the caused: in fact, nothing in him is earlier in time; but neither does the will depend on foreknowledge, although it is earlier in concept." (*Hodos. Phaen. 7. p. 289.*)

This is an important axiom: God remains the cause and never becomes the caused. He does not allow himself to be determined by his creatures, he determines them. Before him nothing is prior to time. Luther says: God does not see lengthwise, but transversely. We see lengthwise and therefore our gaze is stopped; but God does not need to see far, he has everything before him. —

Spener speaks quite differently. He writes: "It is impossible for the elect to be persistently deceived, Matt. 24:24. However, election is not the cause that such people remain steadfast in grace, but because they will remain steadfast, (this) has made them chosen by the Lord." (*Kurze Catechismus — Predigten*. Frankfurt a. M. 1689. p. 355.) The first theologian who used the expression: "in view of faith" is Aegidius Hunnius; but he did not want anything wrong to be understood by it; he thought he could best beat the Calvinists with it.

## Thesis IV. *)

*) Due to the advanced time, Thesis IV. and V. could only be treated summarily.

*[Walther's great Bible lesson.]*

It rejects the doctrine "that God does not will that everyone should be saved, but, regardless of their sin, ordains them to damnation by the mere counsel, purpose and will of God, so that they cannot be saved"; rather, it teaches that "not all those who have heard the Word believe and are therefore condemned so much deeper is not because God has not granted them salvation, but because they themselves are guilty of not learning the Word in this way, but only of despising, blaspheming and profaning it, and that they have resisted the Holy Spirit, who wanted to work in them through the Word"; It also teaches that "such contempt of the Word is not the cause of God's providence

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(*vel praescientia, vel praedestinatio Dei*), but of man's wrong will". (FC SD XI 41)

Ezek. 33:11. 2 Pet. 3:9. 1 Tim. 2:4-6. Joh. 3:16. Rom. 11:32. **<AGtG 217>** Matth. 23:37; Acts 7:51; Prov 1:24-31; Acts 13:46; Hos 13:46. 13:46. Hos. 13:9. Rom. 9:22. cf. v. 23 after the foundation.

Our church's teaching on the universality of God's grace is based on clear, bright passages of Holy Scripture that shine like suns within it. Every Christian should be able to memorize these passages and know where they stand, so that he can hold them up to himself in hours of temptation and also hold them up to those who deny the universality of God's grace and yet claim to follow the Bible. These passages are:

Ezek. 33:11: "As surely as I live, says the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his ways and live."

The Lord adds the question to his prayer: "Why do you want to die, you of the house of Israel?" to testify that he truly does not want this. So if you die eternal death, he says, it is the result of your evil will, and not because I did not want to; no, I am sorry for your death.

The New Testament teaches the same thing.

2 Peter 3:9: "God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to repentance."

Here the generality of God's grace is first expressed in the negative and then in the affirmative. It is almost incomprehensible how the Reformed could have seen such suns shining and yet remain in their darkness and maintain: God does not want all men to be saved. Of course, we shall hear how shamefully Calvin distorted this passage; but since we cannot assume that all reformers are godless people who err against their better judgment and conscience, it is truly incomprehensible how honest people can be so blinded. But they only confirm the words of Scripture: "The natural man hears nothing of the Spirit of God" etc.

1 Timothy 2:4-6: "God wants all men to be helped and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is One God and One Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for all for salvation, that this might be preached in His time."

So God not only wants all people to be helped, but also that they all come to the knowledge of the truth. He wants not only the end, but also the means. There are Reformed who admit that the good Lord, so to speak, had no objection in eternity to all men being saved,

and in this respect accept this passage, but who maintain that he did not want to give the means to salvation to all men. But here it expressly says: "and come to the knowledge of the truth". This is nothing other than the means and the way to life.

Likewise, this passage not only testifies to the universality of the divine will of grace, but also to the universality of salvation, which the Reformed likewise deny. Note that verse 6 does not say: for us alone; one could still think that perhaps only the elect are meant, but: "for all". The words also follow: "that these things might be preached in their time". So God also wants to call all through the gospel. This passage alone overturns the Calvinist doctrine that God's grace does not extend to all people, but only to the elect. The golden saying of the children also belongs here: **<AGtG 218>**

John 3:16: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

God loved the "world", namely the fallen world, the world that had become hostile to God, the wicked and damned world, and he loved it "in such a way" that, etc. The Savior wants to say, as it were, "I myself must marvel at the greatness of God's love; who would think that God so loved the world? Consider this too, it means "gave"; the Son of God has therefore already been given to the whole world; the whole world has not received him, but he has been given to it. So whoever receives Christ in faith does not presume anything, no! he only takes what has been given to him. So no matter how far a sinner may have fallen, he should not ask: "Yes, may I also take hold of it?" Of course you may; for the Son of God has already been given to you; and do you ask: why? our passage answers you: because God has given him to the world; for since you belong to the world, and God has given him to the world, he has also given him to you. Therefore I not only may, but I should and must grasp it for the salvation of my soul. There can never be any question as to whether a sinner may or may not access it; it goes without saying that he may. Indeed, it is a denial of the Gospel that the Methodists and the false pietists, for example, so often say: "Examine yourself to see whether you are allowed to take hold". This is proof that they have no real understanding of the gospel. You are not supposed to do something first so that your Savior can be given to you; you are only supposed to accept him who was given to you 1800 years ago, and if you do that, then you are ready at any moment to pass from time into blessed eternity. Another question is, of course, whether you can accept Christ!

Romans 11:32: "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.."

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This is also a passage which Luther says is a real strengthening of the heart for all poor sinners. When the good Lord looked down on mankind after the fall, he found everything in unbelief according to this passage; but to what end did he allow this to serve him? It says: "that he might have mercy on all". What an unspeakable consolation! For this says: As certain as you are that you have been unbelieving until now, you can now also be certain that God wants to have mercy on you; for as far as the number of unbelievers goes according to our passage, so far goes the number of those on whom he wants to have mercy. No man need therefore despair of his salvation, for a man can go no further than to say, "I am an unbeliever. Well then, says God to such a one, if you realize with horror that you are still unbelieving, you are just the right man for me; for then you know that I want to save you; therefore believe, and you will be saved.

Let us now consider the passages which teach that whoever is condemned is not condemned because God does not want to save him, but only because he does not want to.

Matt. 23:37: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those who are sent to you, how often have I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling."

The Lord calls out these words with tears in his eyes. What passage could testify more clearly to our teaching?

Acts 7:51: "Ye stiff-necked and unchastened in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost, as your fathers did, even so do ye." **<AGtG 219>**

This passage also clearly shows what a false doctrine, which flies in the face of Holy Scripture, is that of the Calvinists [“irresistable grace”], that man does not lose God's grace because of his resistance, but must do what God has previously appointed him to do.

Proverbs 1:24-31: "Because I call, and ye refuse; I stretch out my hand, and no man hearkeneth; and forsake all my counsel, and will not my punishment: so will I laugh at your calamity, and mock you when it cometh, which ye fear, when it cometh upon you as a storm, which ye dread; and your calamity as a tempest, when trouble and distress cometh upon you. Then they will call to me, but I will not answer; they will seek me early and will not find me. Therefore, because they hastened the doctrine, and would not fear the Lord, and would not heed my counsel, and blasphemed all my judgment, they shall eat of the fruit of their doctrine, and be filled with their counsel."

This, too, is a powerful passage showing that man can resist, and that persistent resistance brings God's judgment upon him. Here we also have the interpretation of the word

"hardening". For if a person has despised all God's grace for a long time and has continued to regard God's repeated blows of grace to his heart as nothing, then God's judgment finally falls upon him, and this consists in the fact that God leaves him, namely no longer works in him. The consequence of this is that man now becomes ever more blind, ever harder, in one word, ever more hardened. God does nothing, but precisely because he does nothing for him, he hardens himself. Just as the sun does nothing to make it dark, but because it no longer shines, darkness falls: so it also becomes dark in our hearts when the eternal sun of God's grace no longer shines in them. He does not bring darkness into our hearts, but it is already in us, and it only disappears when the sun of Christ shines in us. But when man mocks God, consciously fights against him again and again, rejects his grace, then God says: Well, if you do not consider yourself worthy of eternal life, I will go away from you, — and now man falls down from step to step; for God does not want to force man. This, of course, is a great mystery, and no mortal can fathom why God does not force us; it is also incomprehensible why he did not force Adam and Eve to remain in his company, why he withdrew his hand from them at their first unfaithfulness; but it says: "Who are you, man, that you want to be right with God?" That is what you stand for: God acts justly, for he owes no man a special mercy apart from the grace he has freely promised to all men. No, whoever rejects all the impressions that God's Word makes on him, and even scoffs at them, saying, "Shall I also be a fool and a mocker?" let him cry out over himself when he goes to hell, for God earnestly wanted to save him, but he did not want to be saved.

Acts. 13:46: "But Paul and Barnabas said openly, The Word of God must first have been spoken to you; but if you reject it, and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, stand, we turn to the Gentiles."

This saying also shows that God does not harden anyone who has not first hardened himself. **<AGtG 220>**

Hosea 13:9: "Israel, thou hast brought thyself into trouble; for thy salvation is with me alone."

Here, too, we see that man is responsible for his own damnation and that God is not the author of it. It is true that man attains salvation only through the free mercy of God, but through his own fault he is lost. Blind reason may speculate about this riddle as much as it likes, but it will not solve it; nor is this necessary, for God will already open it up for us there.

Romans 9:22-23: “For this cause, when God would have shown wrath,

and made known his power, he hath borne with great patience the vessels of wrath prepared unto condemnation, that he might shew the riches of his glory in the vessels of mercy, which he hath prepared unto glory."

[Walther on translating:] Here the Greek text must be compared, for it shows all the more clearly that the Calvinists misuse this passage badly. This passage therefore also says: Christians, to whom the good Lord gives time in their earthly calling so that they can research His Word a little more than others, should not refrain from acquiring an interpretative Bible. They should therefore not be content with the Altenburg Bible alone, although this precious work, which is so wonderfully prepared for home worship, should certainly not be missing in any Christian home. But in addition to this edification Bible, an interpretation Bible is also extremely useful to a Christian. Sometimes Luther translated in such a way that he got the meaning of the original text quite right, but in such a way that a heretic could slip through with his false doctrine if he were only given the translation, whereas he would be caught if the actual words of the original were held out to him. [Walther on translating:] You can easily see this in America when two translators translate an English sentence into German. One will render individual expressions somewhat differently than the other, and yet the translation comes to one thing. While one translates quite well into German, but loses some of the English expression, the other sometimes renders the English expressions more completely and accurately, even if perhaps not in such good German. This is also the case here in our passage. Luther is a master translator like no other; but the German language sometimes forced him, if he wanted to render the main sense of the original text in good German, not to render the expressions used in the original language completely. That is why it is a good thing for Bible scholars to have an interpretation Bible which says: this is what it actually says in Hebrew or Greek; then everyone can say to himself at once: this word is what matters in your translation, this is what you have to pay attention to, or: here Luther has inserted a little word, not to change the sense, but to speak correctly in German; but since it is missing in the original, nothing can be proved from it. If one does not know this, then sometimes, though rarely, a heretic can say to us: "Oh, there is a word in your German Bible that is not in the Greek or Hebrew at all", and so he thinks he has refuted us. You should therefore buy such a work as the Weimar Bible, which has been republished. This priceless gem of our Lutheran church **<AGtG 221>** should not be missing in any home, especially among those who are capable of researching the Bible a little more than others. The use of this work, on which so many highly enlightened and gifted men, such as John

Gerhard, have labored for years in sour sweat, is of incalculable blessing. To dig in such a gold mine must be a true delight of the heart for a true Christian! How many new insights this book gives us into a large number of passages of Holy Scripture, over which a Christian rejoices like a child over the holy Christ. David says that he would rather have God's Word than many thousands of pieces of gold and silver; but of course he does not mean the mere outer letter without the right meaning, for if one does not have this, then one does not have the Word either, but only that in which it is contained. But it is the Christian's task to extract this [right] meaning from the Word of God and to refresh his soul with it. Every new insight into a passage of Scripture is a true ray of sunshine for a Christian, and anyone who does not rejoice in it is not a Christian. —

In our passage we now speak of vessels of wrath and vessels of mercy; of the former it is said in our German Bible that they were prepared for condemnation; of the latter it is said that God had prepared them for glory. In the Greek, however, it is more precisely said of the latter that God prepared them beforehand, not merely prepared them; but this word "beforehand" is not used of the vessels of wrath. This is very important! For from this we see that all who are saved are prepared for salvation by God before the foundation of the world, whereas the vessels of wrath, i.e. those who are damned, are also prepared for damnation, but firstly, not beforehand, and secondly, not by God, but by the devil and their own evil will. Here our doctrine shines forth completely. It would be blasphemy to say that the Holy Spirit has forgotten to add the words "before" and "from God" to the vessels of wrath, so that we have nothing to give to these different ways of speaking! He, who is eternal wisdom, knew perfectly well why he says "from God" one time and not the other, why he says "before" one time and not the other. It is also very important to know that verse 22 in the Greek does not contain the words "therefore there", but instead the words "but if [Εἰ δὲ]". From this we see that when the apostle says in the previous verse, "Does not a potter have power to make one lump into a vessel for honor and another for dishonor?", he does not mean to say: and this is how God really does it, but that he only wants to reject human reason with its foolish objections, which so readily masters and even blasphemes God as soon as it cannot understand why he acts as he does. The apostle rather wants to say: As natural as we find it that a potter makes a soup tureen from clay, and from the same material a nasty vessel, which is placed in a corner so that it is not seen, and how no one confronts him about it: it is just as natural that whatever God may do, no one

may confront him about it. This thought, that God does not allow himself to be mastered by us, also precedes the 20th verse, where it expressly says: "Yes, dear man, who are you, then, that you want to be right with God?" No one should therefore be misled by the words "therefore there" into Calvinistic errors, since these words are not in the original text at all, and since the apostle does not say: as a potter makes vessels of honor and dishonor from a lump, so God also first made vessels of mercy and then vessels of wrath; but he continues: "But if God... bore the vessels of wrath with great patience?" So the apostle's meaning is: What will you, what can you say then? **<AGtG 222>**

The Formula of Concord also draws attention to this when it states:

"Thus the apostle distinguishes with special diligence the work of God, who alone makes vessels of honor, and the work of the devil and of man, who by inspiration of the devil, and not of God, has made himself a vessel of dishonor. For thus it is written in Romans 9: "God bore with great patience the vessels of wrath prepared for condemnation, that he might make known the riches of his glory in the vessels of mercy which he had prepared unto salvation". For the apostle clearly says that God bore the vessels of wrath with great patience, and does not say that he made them vessels of wrath, for if it had been his will, he would not have needed great patience. But that they are prepared for condemnation is the fault of the devil and men themselves, and not of God." (Repetition, Art. 11. p. 721.) [FC SD XI 79-80]

Our Luther, in particular, is suspected of teaching that when Scripture says that God hardens a person, this indicates that God Himself does evil. But Luther interprets such passages quite correctly. When Scripture says that God hardens a person, he says that it means nothing else than this: God no longer does to the sinner what he has previously done to him in vain. Thus Luther writes beautifully in 1522, three years before he wrote his book: "That Free Will is Nothing":

"Why do you argue about the evil that God does? I see that you have nothing else to do in such disruptions of Satan. God does not need a work, nor is it a work or a deed, but an omission of the work of God. For that is why we do evil, because He ceases to work in us and lets nature do what it does in its wickedness. Otherwise, where He Himself works, nothing but good follows. And this omission on God's part is called obduracy in Scripture. For evil cannot happen because it is nothing, but only comes about when nothing good happens or is prevented." (Letter to J. Lange, dated 1522. XV. Appendix. p. 230 f.)

So here Luther says in clear words: "The nonactivity of God is called hardening in Scripture." Furthermore, he writes: "Evil cannot happen because it is nothing." Evil is only a quality of certain things that are not evil in themselves. Man, for example, is not evil in himself, but he has evil in himself. Even the devil is not evil in himself, he is rather a creature of God, and in this respect he is something good; but he has an evil nature, namely, he is an enemy of God.

Let us now listen to what Calvin says. He teaches, as we know, that God first destined man to damnation and then to sin, so that sin is not actually the cause of damnation, but the means and the way for God to (supposedly) justly condemn the reprobate. He writes in his famous work "Institutes of the Christian Religion":

"Predestination we call the eternal counsel of God, by virtue of which he has determined with himself what should happen with respect to every man. For not all are created in the same proportion; but eternal life is preordained for some, and eternal damnation for others. **<AGtG 223>** Therefore, as each one is created for one or the other end, so we say that he is predestined either to life or to death." (*Institut. christianae rel. L. III, c. 21. § 5. Ed. Tholuck. p. 183.*)

Calvin further writes: "Since God foreknows what is to come in no other way than because he has so decreed that it shall come to pass, it is in vain that one argues about foreknowledge, since it is obvious that everything comes to pass because it is so decreed and willed. It is denied that it is expressly stated that it was decreed by God that Adam would be lost through his apostasy. As if the God of whom the Scriptures preach that he does what he wills should have created the noblest of his creatures for an uncertain purpose!..... That all mortals in the person of one man are doomed to eternal death, the Scriptures testify with a loud voice. Since this cannot be attributed to nature, it is quite clear that it came from the admirable counsel of God.....I further ask: Where did it come from that the fall of Adam plunged so many nations, together with their children, into eternal death without remedy, but because it so pleased God? Here the otherwise so loquacious tongues must fall silent. I confess that it is a ghastly counsel; but no one can deny that God foreknew what course man would take before he created him, and that he foreknew this because he had decreed it beforehand in his counsel." (*Institutes L. III. c. 23. § 6 sq. p. 151.*)

Note this: Calvin himself calls the counsel of God, which

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he teaches, a terrible one; thus he condemns himself. From God, who is eternal love, comes no horrible counsel; rather, horrible things come only from the devil.

Furthermore, Calvin writes: "Those whom God created for the reproach of life and the destruction of death, that they might become instruments of his wrath and examples of his severity, he deprives, in order that they may attain their end, sometimes of the possibility of hearing his word, sometimes he blinds and hardens them more by the preaching of it." (*Institutes. etc. L. c. c. 24. § 12. p. 166.*)

He further writes: "The objection is made that men were not predestined by God's decree to the corruption which is now claimed to be the cause of damnation. If, therefore, they are lost in their corruption, they suffer punishment for nothing else than for the misfortune into which Adam fell by predestination and into which he plunged his descendants with him. Is not he therefore unjust who mocks his creatures so cruelly? I confess, indeed, that all the children of Adam have fallen into the miserable condition into which they are now banished, by the will of God; and this is just what I said at the beginning, that one must always go back at last to the mere good pleasure of the divine will, the cause of which lies hidden in him." (*Instit. etc. L. III. c. 23. § 4. p. 149.*) **<AGtG 224>**

Likewise, "That the reprobate do not obey the word of God revealed to them, would be justly attributed to their wickedness and sinfulness, if it were only added at the same time that they are devoted to this wickedness, because they are awakened by God's righteous but unsearchable judgment to glorify his honor by their damnation." *(Institut. etc. L. III. e. 24. § 14. p. 168.*)

Further: "By the promise God wills nothing else than that His mercy be open to all those who desire and ask for it; which no others do than those whom He has enlightened. But he enlightens those whom he has predestined to salvation. . . But why does he call them all? That the consciences of the pious may the more assuredly rely thereon, seeing that there is no distinction of sins, if faith be present." (*Institutes etc. L. III. c. 24. § 17. p. 170.*)

It is terrible to see how Calvin perverts the clearest passages on the universality of God's grace. Thus he writes:

"One adduces the passage Ezek. 18:23, that God does not desire the death of the sinner, but rather that he should repent and live.... . If one seeks the true meaning of the prophet, he only wants to give hope of forgiveness to those who repent. ... Experience teaches, however, that God wills the conversion of those whom he invites to himself in such a way that he does not touch the hearts of all." (*Instit. etc. L. III. c. 24. § 15. p. 168 sq.*)

Similarly, on 1 Tim. 2:4, he writes: "The passage

of Paul 1 Tim. 2:4 is cited, where he teaches that God wills that all men should be helped. . . I answer that God thereby indicates nothing else than that he has not closed the way to salvation to any class of men." (*Instit. etc. L. III. c. 24. § 16, p. 169.*)

He means, therefore, that by these words Paul only means to say that God has among all classes, among tailors, cobblers, Frenchmen, Germans, etc., men whom he wishes to save. people whom he wants to save.

Furthermore: "It is also said, not without reason, that (according to Rom. 9:22-23, the basic text) the vessels of wrath are directed to condemnation, but the vessels of mercy are directed to the front; because in this way he (Paul) ascribes and attributes the glory of salvation to God, and casts the guilt of perishing on those who bring it on themselves through their own will. But though I grant them that he softens the severity of the first part by the different mode of expression, yet it is in no way consistent to ascribe the 'preparation' for damnation to anything but the secret counsel of God." (*Institutes etc. L. III. c. 23. § 1. p. 147.*) **<AGtG 225>**

Calvin thus asks nothing of the generality of God's grace after all the bright, sunlit passages; whatever may be written in the Bible, he still maintains that God has, according to an unconditional counsel, chosen some to salvation and destined others to damnation, and that Scripture must be interpreted according to this theory of his. His intimate friend, Theodor Beza, who later continued his work and who is called the "Pope of the Reformation", writes in the same way:

"Paul answers Rom. 9-13. concerning the reprobate, or those whom God hates even before they are born, and whom he has appointed to destruction without regard to previous unworthiness." (*N. T. 1598. Ad 1. c. II, fol. 67.*) "They speak with Paul who say that some are created by God for a just destruction, and who take offense at this formula, betray their ignorance." (*L. c. ad v. 21. fol. 69.*)

Let us now listen to another passage from the Presbyterian Confession. Alongside the Dutch Reformed and a group of Baptists, they are the church community here in America that still adheres strictly to Calvin's teachings (although there are also Presbyterians of the newer school who are more Arminian). The Presbyterians make the following statement in their symbolic book:

"By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated to everlasting life, and others foreordained to eternal death.... Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the

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elect only. The rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice." (*The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. Philadelphia, 1840. p. 23. 25. f.*) —

Perhaps one will have wondered that in our discussions Luther has been mentioned so little, contrary to our usual usage; but there is a good reason for this. That he was not a Pelagian; that he taught that we have to thank God's mercy alone for our election, the whole world believes; we need not prove that to anyone. But many people now do not want to believe that he taught the universality of God's grace for the whole world of sinners; on the contrary, they want to make him a Calvinist. Therefore, this time we limited ourselves mainly to quoting such passages from him which clearly show that he does not hold Calvin's doctrine. For example, he says:

"The cause why God rejects this or that person should not be laid on our Lord God, but on man; the blame should be laid on him, not on God. For the promises are *universal* (general), given and promised to all men, no one excepted, be he who he may, without distinction. Now God wills that all men should be saved; therefore the fault is not of our Lord God, who promises it, and what he promises he will faithfully and surely keep, but of our own, who will not believe it." (*Table Talk*. Erlanger Ed., vol. 60, 163)

Furthermore, he writes in a concern, which Bugenhagen and others also signed: **<AGtG 226>** "Caspar Cruziger ... indicated to me how he ... understood from your friends that you (are) entangled with strange thoughts concerning the providence of God.... Such would be your propositions and complaints that God Almighty knows from eternity which are to be saved or will be saved, whether they are dead, alive or yet to come. This is true and should and must be admitted, since he knows all things and nothing is hidden from him; because he has counted and knows the drops in the sea, the stars in the sky, the roots of all trees, branches, twigs, leaves, and all the hairs of men. From this you finally conclude that you do whatever you want, good or evil, God knows whether you shall be saved or not. This is true; and yet you think more of damnation than of salvation, and hesitate about it, not knowing God's disposition towards you; therefore you become very fainthearted and completely deluded. Therefore, as a servant of my dear Lord Jesus Christ,

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I am writing you this report and consolation so that you may know how God Almighty is disposed towards you, whether you are destined for salvation or damnation. God Almighty, even though he knows all things and all works and thoughts in all creatures must be done according to his will, *juxta decretum voluntatis suae* (according to the counsel of his will), yet his earnest will and opinion, also command, is determined from eternity to make all men blessed and partakers of eternal joys, as Ezek. 18:23, where he says: "God does not will the death of the sinner, but that he should repent and live. Therefore, since he wants to save and have sinners who live and hover everywhere under the wide, high heaven, you should not separate yourselves and separate yourselves from the grace of God through your foolish thoughts inspired by the devil. For his mercy stretches out from the beginning to the end, from noon to midnight, Psalm 103:12, and overshadows all who are converted, who truly repent, and who partake of his mercy and seek help. For 'he is rich in all who call on him' (Rom. 10:12). This requires a real, true faith that casts out such fear and despair, which is our righteousness, as Rom. 3:22 says: 'The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ, who is in all and above all men. Remember these words: *'In omnes, super omnes*'" (in all and above all), "whether you are not also among them, and one of them, who are under the field of sinners. As your heart will convince you and feel it in your conscience; for you want to rise too high and flutter, and give room and place to unholy thoughts and cast God's word to the wind.... . "Come, all you who labor and are weighed down, and I will give you rest. He does not just say: "Come", but: "All", excluding no one, whoever he wants, even if he is the very worst, for the best will be the last, Matt. 21:31. **<AGtG 227>** Harlots and knaves must do it, the worldly pious do not belong here, those who wear clean clothes. But since they are all to come, none excepted, be he equal or think what he will, run along with them and jump in too, do not willfully stay behind with the lost crowd, do not neglect yourselves so carelessly and willfully." (Consolation against the temptation of God's providence. 1528. X, 2036 ff. [StL 10, 1737 ff.; not in *Am. Ed*.; see Currie translation **here**.])

Note the words: "that God Almighty may know from eternity which shall be saved or not." Luther famously writes in his preface to the letter to the Romans: "In the 9th, 10th and 11th chapters he teaches about the eternal providence of God, from which it originally flows who should believe or not believe." Some think that Luther is teaching here that God has decreed in his dispensation not only who should believe, but also who should not believe. But our passage shows

us that he understands the word "should believe" in the sense of "will believe", just as he himself does not write in the Latin translation: *qui credere debent*, or *qui credant oportet*, but: *qui credituri sunt*. In former times it often happened that the word "shall" was taken for "become", just as the English *shall* has the same meaning. Indeed, even now in German one still says: "das soll wohl so sein", for: that will probably be so.

Furthermore, Luther writes: "God does not grieve over the death of the sinner, which he works, but grieves over the misery and death that he finds in man, and would gladly take it away. . . He wills that all men should be saved 1 Timothy 2:4, because he came to all by the word of the Spirit; and it is the fault of our will that we do not receive him, as the Lord Christ says in Matthew 23:37: 'How often have I wanted to gather your children together, as the hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you were not willing!'" (That Free Will is Nothing. XVIII, 2235 f.)

This passage is the key to Luther's important, so often misunderstood book "That Free Will is Nothing". It shows us that he teaches the exact opposite of what Calvin claims. Incidentally, when he says: "God does not grieve over the death of the sinner which he works", he naturally means this: that he is said to work it.

Furthermore, Luther writes: "Human reason conceives an unequal will of God, as if God were like a tyrant who has some companions whose nature he allows to please him, be it good or not good, and on the other hand he hates the others, they do as they please. So we should not think of God's will. This saying is eternally true in Psalm 5:5: "You are not a God who pleases ungodliness or sin. For though he accepts the saints who still have sin in them, he does not accept them without a great payment; Christ has to become the sacrifice for which God **<AGtG 228>** accepts and spares us, as long as we remain in faith and if we are in faith." (Concerning the Sins of the Elect. A. 1536. X, 2001) —

Some maintain that Luther also rejected the doctrine that man can resist God; but he interprets, among other things, the passage John 7:17 thus: "This is His (the Father's) will, that I (Christ) teach and you listen to Me and believe. If you do this and do not resist me, the Holy Spirit will enlighten you and teach you that this is the Father's will in Christ, that he sent the Son to be heard." (On John 7:17. VII, 2255.)

To cite here only one theologian of the 17th century, Quenstedt writes: "That the cause why some believe is not in man, but in God, this agrees with the word of God, Ephes. 2:8. Phil. 2:13; but what is inferred from this, namely, that the cause

why others persist in unbelief is likewise in God, this, as it is contrary to the Scriptures 1 Tim. 2:4. 2 Pet. 3:9, etc., does not follow from that sentence either. For the lack of faith is solely of man, who by stubborn resistance and rejection of the means prevents God from bringing it forth in the will of man. The cause that some do not believe is therefore not in God, but in unbelieving men themselves." (*Theol. did.-polem. III, 59. s.*)

It is probably not necessary to cite more testimonies from our old dogmatists to confirm our thesis, for the whole world knows that the Lutheran Church agrees with them. But it will not be superfluous to show how differently Luther and Calvin interpret precisely those passages which seem to some to contain the Calvinist doctrine. For these passages show most clearly that Luther was free from all Calvinism, since otherwise he would undoubtedly have interpreted these passages Calvinistically, just as Calvin actually uses them to confirm his error. To show this, we repeat here a quotation which was previously communicated in our Synod in 1859. It reads:

"Here is another example of how different Luther's doctrine of predestination is from Calvin's. To the words of the Lord Matt. 11:25: 'I praise thee, Father and Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes,' Calvin adds by way of explanation: 'That some come to faith, others remain blinded and hardened, this happens through his free election, because he draws some while he passes by others, and makes a distinction only among men whose nature is the same. *) [*) S. *J. Calvini in N. T. Commentarii. Ed. Tholuck. Vol. I., p. 274.*] On the same words, however, Luther writes: 'Christ here boasts that God is right in hiding his secrets from these wise and prudent men, because they themselves want to be above, not below God. Not that he hides it in fact and truth or in will, since he is authorized to preach it publicly under all heavens and in all lands; but that he has mentioned such a **<AGtG 229>** sermon, from which the wise and prudent by nature have an abhorrence and which is hidden from them through their own fault, because they do not want to have it. (VII, 201.) Further on the words of Matthew 13:13 and 15: 'Therefore I speak to them in parables. For with seeing eyes they do not see, etc. For this people's heart is hardened, and their ears hear evil, and their eyes slumber, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted, that I may help them' — Calvin writes

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about these words: 'He says that he speaks darkly to the multitude, because they are not partakers of the true light. However, when he says that the blind are covered with a blanket so that they remain in their darkness, he does not attribute the guilt of this matter to them, but rather praises the grace given to the apostles, because it is not equally common to all. Thus he gives no cause except the secret counsel of God, although the reason for it is hidden from us, but known to Himself... For this purpose the Lord actually wants his word to be preached so that people's hearts may be renewed and they may be reconciled to him. But with regard to the rejected, Isaiah proclaims here, on the contrary, that the stony hardness remains in them, so that they do not receive mercy, and that the word is deprived of its effect for them, so that it does not soften their hearts to repentance.' Concerning the same words Luther writes: 'These words: Lest they one day see with their eyes . . . and be converted, that I may help them, seem to have been spoken out of envy, as if he did not want them to see and be helped. But this whole passage must be read one after the other in such a context that it is like a chain, as follows: This people has a hardened heart, and ears that hear evil, and closed eyes, etc., hence it is that they cannot be converted and cannot be helped. As if to say, the hardening of their hearts stands in the way, that they cannot see and that I cannot help them. I would gladly help them, he says, therefore I send my Son; but the hardening of their hearts stands in the way of my will and their salvation. VII, 295." (The Lutheran Doctrine of Justification, a paper, etc. p. 49 ff. [1859])

(Luther famously dictated this interpretation of the Gospel of Matthew to a young professor so that it would be a model of correct scriptural interpretation for him).

Let us then not only use the quotes from Luther to strengthen our faith, but let us also not forget that those numerous passages from Calvin show us what it looks like in our own hearts. For this man's terrible speeches are nothing other than the products of an unenlightened reason, which we all have by nature. We too naturally think like Calvin. Suppose, for example, that five hundred people have heard a sermon **<AGtG 230>** and only a few have allowed themselves to be captured by God's Word. Now it is certain that no one can accept the Word by his own efforts, but rather that God must open the heart of each one. So what does our reason think? It thinks: This can have no other reason than that God forces his word on some, forces them to accept it, while he passes by others and does not want to convert them. This is the diabolical logic that

dwells within us. And how often do we encounter it! Don't many people say or think when they sin? I can't help it, God made me this way once? Even Adam and Eve hinted after the fall into sin that God himself was actually to blame for it. Even from the mouths of people who want to be considered pious, one often hears sayings like this: I can't help it if I don't get better, the Savior doesn't make me better. Sometimes people also pretend that they cannot fall from grace at all, while they have been living in terrible mortal sin for years. Incidentally, the Calvinist error basically dominates the whole of modern pantheistic philosophy. After Calvin had made God the author of sin, it was only one step further to deny the existence of sin altogether; for since God cannot do sin, reason must further conclude that sin is not really sin at all, but only a natural process. Thus we see in recent philosophy how reason, without God's Word, sinks step by step deeper and deeper into the abyss; first God is made the author of sin, then denied, and the world is made God.

## Thesis V. *)

*) Here follows the minutes of Pastor Hein's 10th session, which still deals with Thesis V. and concludes the doctrinal proceedings. D. S.

It teaches that "concerning that which is revealed in Christ, God still keeps much of this mystery secret and hidden, and reserves it for His wisdom and knowledge alone, which we should not investigate, nor follow our thoughts in it, nor conclude or ponder, but keep to the revealed Word; which is a reminder of the greatest need, for our ingenuity is always much more interested in this than in what God has revealed to us in his Word, because we cannot reconcile it together, nor are we commanded to do so." (FC SD XI 52-53)

Rom. 11:33-36; 9:18-21.

The following comment was made on this: As already mentioned, this is the peculiarity of the Lutheran church, that where God has left a gap, it does not bridge it with reason. If it cannot rhyme two doctrines with each other, it leaves them unrhymed with each other and believes God and takes reason captive to the obedience of Christ, as is required of every Christian. Now it cannot be denied that in this doctrine many things degenerate which we cannot possibly rhyme with one another. Thus Scripture teaches that whoever is elected to eternal life is not so **<AGtG 231>** because he has done anything

for the sake of which God should or would have chosen him, but rather that God first had to remove the reluctance in him. And yet it also teaches that those who are rejected are rejected because of their own sin and guilt. Who can rhyme with this? Reason will say: How is it possible that these are rejected because of their sin, since God could have taken away their rebellion? for that is not the cause of election, that the elect had less hard hearts. But we believe both, for both are revealed in Holy Scripture. Furthermore, God created all people for eternal life, and yet he allowed Adam and Eve to be tempted and overcome by the devil. Reason says: If God had sincerely willed that men should be eternally saved, he could not have allowed the devil to trap us. Or, says reason, if God wished to save me, how could it be possible that he created them knowing that they would fall? Or, why did he not destroy them again immediately after the fall, so that they could not fall into hell? We cannot make sense of it. Scripture teaches that God loved all people and wants to save them. And yet we find that whole nations have had no Word of God for centuries, and therefore have not been able to reject it directly. For centuries they have sat in darkness and the shadow of death. Furthermore, some are born among false believers, while others are born among true believers. Some have many hindrances to coming to Christ, while others have many facilitators. Some God bears with great patience for years, converts them and finally saves them, others he takes out of their course of sin in the prime of life and plunges them into hell. All mysteries that reason cannot solve! If we want to follow it and believe, we become blasphemers. The false church also blasphemes God in fact and says: "God does not want to save everyone; that is why he gives one person a falsified word, another a pure one; one person godless parents, another pious ones; one person unbelieving teachers, another believing ones. Still others say: It is because some are better than others. Or they say: The Gentiles did not receive the Word because God foreknew that they would not believe it; or: They will be saved because they did not have the Word. Yes, people also want to help themselves by teaching that even after death there is still a possibility of conversion. All this is nothing but the thoughts of men! Our Lutheran Church does not accept this; it does not want to mix human thoughts into the divine Word. That is why it says in our Thesis: "It teaches that 'about that which is not commanded us'." (see above.)

That there are such mysteries in this doctrine, we see from the fact that

the apostle Paul, after dealing with the election of grace, finally exclaims:

Rom. 11:33-36, "O what depth of riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"

After he has finished this teaching, he feels as if he is standing before an abyss. Then he looks into it and bursts into words: O what a depth! You can't see to the bottom. So he continues:

"How utterly incomprehensible are his judgments, and his ways unsearchable! For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? Or who has given Him anything beforehand that will be repaid to Him? For from Him, and through Him, and in Him, are all things. To Him be glory for ever and ever! Amen." **<AGtG 232>**

The apostle Paul therefore also answers those who claim that what he teaches is completely contrary to reason, which must believe that God is an unjust God,

Romans 9:18-21: "He therefore has mercy on whom he wills and rejects whom he wills. So you say to me: What does he owe us? Who can resist his will? Yes, dear man, who are you that you want to be right with God? Does a work say to its master, "Why do you make me like this? Has not a potter power to make one lump into a barrel for honor and another for dishonor?"

He is not saying that God wants to act as arbitrarily as a potter. But he is saying that just as you are not allowed to ask a potter why he acts in this way, you are not allowed to take God to school and say: God is not allowed to act in this way. No, bow down and believe both that God is eternal love and that he acts rightly, just as he acts.

Hence the Formula of Concord also says: "When we see that God gives his word in one place and does not give it in another, takes it away from one place and lets it remain in another; item, one is hardened, blinded, given to a wrong mind, another, though in the same guilt, is converted again, etc.: in these and similar questions Paul shows us a certain goal, how far we should go; namely, that we should recognize God's judgment in one part. For it is a well-deserved punishment of sins when God punishes a country or people for despising his word in such a way that it also affects their descendants, as can be seen in the case of the Jews; in this way God shows his seriousness to his own people and countries, which we all deserve and are worthy of, because we behave badly against God's word and often grieve the Holy Spirit."

Doesn't our dear Germany come to mind? How splendidly

it stood there more than a hundred years ago! Now most of the pulpits are occupied by seducers. There one hears of us. But we must be an abominable sect. Beware of them, they call out to those who are preparing to move to this country. So the poor people come over here and think: Just not to the Missouri Synod! We must see this, and cannot comprehend that God can allow the poor simple souls to be so shamefully deceived and defrauded, and that we, who are no better, possess the pure Gospel. If we did not have the doctrine that it is all grace, we could not believe that we had the pure doctrine. We would deserve the same punishment as those who languish under false prophets. But it strengthens our heart, it makes us happy to know that this is God's counsel of grace. But we should not let this make us proud and secure, but rather think: O how great is God's goodness and mercy towards us! We deserved to have false teachers, yes, to have been born **<AGtG 233>** among the Gentiles, and now he has given us the precious treasure of his pure word! — But this is how God has done it as long as the world has existed; he has acted according to grace, not according to merit.

The Formula of Concord continues: "That we may live in the fear of God and recognize and praise God's goodness without and against our merit in and with us, to whom he gives and leaves his word, whom he does not harden and reject. For because our nature is corrupted by sin, we are worthy and guilty of God's wrath and condemnation, and when he gives it by grace, we often reject it and make ourselves unworthy of eternal life. Act. 13, 46. And such his righteous, well-deserved judgment he allows to be seen in many countries, peoples and persons, so that, if we are held against them and compared with them, we may learn all the more diligently to recognize and praise God's pure, undeserved grace in the vessels of mercy. For those are not wronged who are punished and receive the wages of their sins; but in the others, when God gives and preserves his there and thereby enlightens, converts and preserves people, God praises his pure grace and mercy without their merit. If we go this far in this article, we remain on the right path, as it is written in Hos. 13:9: 'Israel, thou art destroyed, the iniquity is thine: but my mercy is pure to save thee. But what in this disputation wants to run too high and out of these bounds, we should put our finger on the mouth with Paulo, remember and say: "Who are you, O man, who want to be right with God? Romans 9:20 For that we cannot, nor ought not, to search out and reason out everything in this article, is testified by the great apostle Paul, who, when he has much discoursed on this article from the revealed word of God, as soon as he comes to indicate what God has reserved of this mystery of his hidden wisdom, he presses it down and cuts it off with

the following words: 'O what a depth of riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are his judgments and unsearchable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord? Rom. 11:33, that is, apart from and above what he has revealed to us in his word." (Repetition. Art. 11. p. 716 f.)

Already at that time, when the Formula of Concord came out, it was reproached by the Calvinists that it had no doctrine of the counsel of damnation; it had Pelagian doctrine and placed the difference in man. To this Chemnitz, Kirchner and Selnecker replied in the "Apology to the Christian Book of Concord" thus:

"Nor does the Christian Book of Concord deny that there is reprobation in God, or that God should not reprobate some, nor does it go against Luther's saying, since in his *servo arbitrio* *) [*) That is, in Luther's writing: "That Free Will is Nothing."] **<AGtG 234>** he writes against Erasmus, that this is the highest order of faith, to believe that God is nevertheless the most good, who saves so few; but that he does not ascribe to God the real cause of such rejection or damnation, which is the doctrine of the contrary (the Calvinists); and that, when it comes to this disputation, all men should put their finger on their mouths and say earnestly with the Apostle Paul Rom. 11: 'They are broken because of their unbelief', and Rom. 6: 'The wages of sin is death'; on the other hand, when it is asked why the Lord God **does** not convert all men by his Holy Spirit and make them believers, etc., we should speak with the apostle: 'How incomprehensible are his judgments and unsearchable his ways', but by no means attribute to God the Lord himself the willing and real cause of the rejection or condemnation of the impenitent."

It is true that God could convert all people if he wanted to. As well as he created a pious heart in Adam and Eve, he could also transform our hearts by force. Why he does not do this, no one can say. All kinds of reasons are given, but they are not found in the Bible. They say: Man is not an animal, so God must treat him as a free being. But that is not true! Man is not free. Only the first human beings were free, because God had created this for them. It remains a mystery to us why God acts in this way. Those who want to solve it without the clear word do not honor him. Where God solves a riddle for us, we accept it; where he does not solve it, we do not say: That may be so; but rather: We do not know: We do not know. A day is coming when God will make it clear to us. Then we will see with delight what glorious counsel God has taken and how gloriously he has carried it out. The elect will then sing a

song of praise and say: "God, you are righteous, praise be to your name forever and ever!" And none of those who go to hell will be able to accuse God of injustice; they too must confess: "Yes, God, you are righteous!" The rich man does not accuse God of being in hell. He knows that he is in this place of torment because he deserves nothing else.

The aforementioned *Apology* etc. continues: "But they press upon us and say: Because you confess the election of the elect, you must also confess the other, that in God himself is a cause of reprobation from eternity, even apart from sin, etc. — So we say that we are by no means intending to make God the cause of reprobation (which is not really in God, but in sin) and to ascribe to Himself the cause of the condemnation of the ungodly, but want to remain with the saying of the prophet Hosea chapter 13, where God says: "Israel, you bring yourself into misfortune, your salvation is with me alone". Nor, as we have heard above from Luther, do we want to inquire about the dear God if he is hidden and has not revealed himself. For it is too high for us and we cannot comprehend it. The more we enter into this, the further we get from the dear God and the more we doubt his most gracious will." (*Apologia*, etc., written by Chemnitz, Selnecker and Kirchner. Heidelberg, 1583. fol. 206. f.) **<AGtG 235>**

The newer theologians say that what the Formula of Concord has written about the election of grace is worthy of all honor; through it this doctrine has indeed been further developed and much has been opened up; but it has nevertheless put forward two propositions that could not be united; therefore it would be the task of our time to mediate these two opposites. But they will not glue together what God has shattered for our reason. Even two recent theologians in Germany have admitted that the glory of the Lutheran Church lies precisely in the fact that it accepts what it finds in God's Word, and if Holy Scripture does not rhyme with something, it leaves it unrhymed.

Thus Guericke writes: "Both (the Lutheran and Reformed Church) declare decisively that whoever becomes unsaved is rejected only through his own guilt as a sinner *) [*) Many Reformed, however, claim at the same time that God has rejected the rejected not because of their unworthiness, but out of mere good pleasure]; But while the Lutheran Church remains with this sentence in modest resignation, the Reformed Church extends it ruthlessly to all the unsaved in a consistent argumentation of reason — indeed, in unbending, rigid consistency of reason that does not bow even to the Word of God. Whoever becomes unsaved becomes so through his own fault; but this fault only takes place because God does not also here strongly communicate his grace; but God does not also here

strongly communicate his grace because he has decreed this damnation from eternity. The Lutheran Church recognizes from this that it is not for mortals to want to penetrate this mystery of divine justice, and in humble submission refrains from answering a question which, as it does not conceal, could only be answered blasphemously by the weak mortal. The blessed, it teaches, is saved by God's grace alone (in Christ) without any merit of his own; the unblessed is unblessed through his own fault, because he continually resists divine grace; why the resistance of the former to divine grace is finally broken, but not that of the latter, is not the merit of the former, but the fault of the latter;".

Guericke declares the doctrine as we have taught it to be the doctrine of the Lutheran Church, and praises it highly for not wanting to build a bridge over an abyss over which God has not built one, but says: If you want to cross it, you cannot walk over it, but must leap over it with faith. That is what we do, and thus do not fall into it. Calvin, on the other hand, builds a bridge, and those who cross it fall into the abyss. We Lutherans want nothing to do with this paper bridge.

Guericke continues: "The underlying inner disposition of man, however, if it is good, comes only from God, but if it is evil, not from God; but man with his stupid understanding, clouded by sin, **<AGtG 236>** is not able to explore this deepest depth of the divine workshop, and it is greater wisdom to recognize the divine mystery than to solve it blasphemously." (General Christian Symbolism). (General Christian Symbolism. p. 294. ff.)

Thomasius also gives our Lutheran Church the honors in this respect After he has explained what Holy Scripture says about election, he continues:

"Just with this we have arrived at one of the greatest difficulties, which perhaps cannot be solved at all: On the one hand, God's eternal will of love in Christ, that all may be helped without exception; on the other hand, the fact that this will is not accomplished in all.... This problem" (this as yet unsolved task) "is of course easily solved if one either accepts with Augustine and Calvin a twofold absolute decree of election and reprobation, or if one allows with Pelagius the eternal counsel of grace to be conditioned by the divine foreknowledge of the good behavior of human freedom. Both are just as simple and easy — as contrary to Scripture." (Christ's Person and Work. 1875. I, 426. f.)

Praise be to God, we have no doctrine so contrary to Scripture in our Book of Concord. But let us not forget this either: To whom much

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is given, much will be required. Therefore, let us also faithfully hold on to this unspeakable treasure! Above all, we preachers must treat this teaching with fear and trembling when we present it to the church of God, and call upon God on our knees that no straw may enter into this heavenly wheat. But the dear churches must praise God when their preachers proclaim the eternal counsel of God's grace. They should not come to it with reason, but test everything according to God's Word, and when they see that it is God's eternal wisdom, they should accept it gratefully and then apply it in joy and sorrow, in happiness and misery, in life and death. Thus this teaching will be a lamp for them which will not go out even in the night of death, but will rather shine very brightly so that the transition from time to eternity will be a triumphal procession of the soul from the valley of sorrow to the eternal heavenly kingdom.

In order to bring this important subject to a close, it was decided that at the next Synodal Assembly the remaining Thesis VI would be dealt with first, and then points 10 and 11 of the main lecture would be discussed.

22 [1879 Western District essay by Walther] ^
**<AGtG 237>** [page numbers from *All Glory to God* book.]

# Doctrinal Proceedings.

The sixth of the theses on which the doctrinal negotiations were based at the last Synodal District Assembly was still available for discussion, on the subject: "Also with its doctrine of Election by Grace, the Evangelical Lutheran Church gives All Glory to God alone" *) [*) See Synodal Report of the Western District etc. of 1877, p. 23], which deals with the use of this doctrine. The speaker, Dr. Walther, had developed this one thesis further, namely in five theses, which all highlight the main points in this matter from the Formula of Concord. They are as follows:

Thesis I.

"Because all Scripture is inspired of God, not for security and impenitence, but for punishment, correction, and amendment, 2 Tim. 3:16; again, because all things in the Word of God are therefore ordained for us, not that we should be driven thereby into despair, but that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope, Rom. 15:4: so without all doubt in no way is this the sound mind or right use of the doctrine of the eternal providence of God, that either impenitence or despair should be caused or strengthened thereby." (Repetition. Art. XI. Müller, p. 707 [FC SD XI 12])

Thesis II.

"This also belongs to the further explanation and salutary use of the doctrine of the predestination of God for salvation (*de divina praedestinatione electorum ad salutem*): because only the elect are saved, whose names are written in the book of life, how one can know, from which and whereby one can recognize which are the elect, who can and should accept this doctrine for consolation. And of this we are not to judge according to our reason, nor according to the law, nor from some outward appearance." (Ibid, p. 709.) (FC SD XI 25-26)

Thesis III.

"Nor should we presume to search the secret, hidden abyss of divine providence, but rather pay attention to the revealed will of God." (Ibid, p. 709.) (FC SD XI 26)

Thesis IV.

"Therefore, whoever wishes to be saved should not burden or trouble himself with thoughts of the secret counsel of God, whether he is also chosen and ordained to **<AGtG 238>** eternal life, so that the wretched Satan is wont to tempt pious hearts.

23 [1879 Western District essay by Walther]

But they are to hear Christ, who is the book of life and of God's eternal election to eternal life for all God's children. He testifies to all men without distinction that God wills all men to come to him, weighed down and burdened with sin, that they may be refreshed and saved. According to this teaching of his, they should forsake their sins, repent, believe his promise and rely on him completely, and because we are not able to do this on our own, the Holy Spirit wants to work this, namely repentance and faith, in us through the Word and the sacraments. And that we may accomplish this, persevere in it and remain constant, we should call upon God for his grace, which he has promised us in holy baptism, and not doubt that he will impart it to us by means of his promise." (Ibid, p. 718 f.)

Thesis V.

"Since the Holy Spirit dwells in the elect who have believed, as in his temple, who is not idle in them, but impels the children of God to obedience to the commandments of God: in the same way, believers should not be idle, much less resist the promptings of the Spirit of God, but should practice all Christian virtues, godliness, modesty, temperance, patience, brotherly love, and make every effort to make their calling and election firm, so that the more they have the Spirit's power and strength within them, the less they will doubt it." (Ibid, p. 719.) (FC SD XI 72)

The Synod gladly took these theses as a basis for its further discussion of this subject, firmly convinced that it was absolutely necessary to treat it in detail and thoroughly.

The speaker made the following introductory remarks in justification of his behavior:

When we dealt with the doctrine of election of grace two years ago [1877], we were very sorry that we could not also discuss the last thesis, which deals with the use of this doctrine. For my part, I am now firmly convinced that it was God's gracious government that we had to leave it. In the first place, we could have treated it only very superficially, although it was one of the most important, if not the most important, of the theses. Secondly, it was not our intention to present the doctrine of election by grace in its entirety, but we only wanted to speak about those parts of it which show that our dear Lutheran Church gives all glory to God alone in the presentation of this doctrine. We left everything else aside. With this incomplete presentation, it could very easily happen that a reader who was not present at

our discussion would find some of it obscure and inexplicable, even offensive. I hope to God that in a thorough **<AGtG 239>** discussion of the doctrine of the right use of this mystery of God's election of grace to eternal life, what remained dark will become light and what seemed to be offensive will really appear to be in the most beautiful harmony with the whole holy Christian faith. May God give us abundantly his Holy Spirit in these days, that He may enlighten us through His holy word, so that we may not fall into error, but rather be mightily strengthened in our faith, our love and our hope through contemplation of this subject, and finally be ever better prepared for a blessed departure from this valley of misery. Yes, God grant that this comforting teaching may also be preserved and passed on to our dear children through our ministry, and preserved for our entire orthodox Evangelical Lutheran Church of America!

The meeting then proceeded to the discussion of

## Thesis I.

This reads:

"Because all Scripture is inspired by God, not for security and impenitence, but for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 2 Tim. 3:16; again, because all things in God's Word are therefore prescribed for us, not that we should be driven thereby into despair, but that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope, Rom. 15:4: so without all doubt in no way is this the sound mind or right use of the doctrine of the eternal providence of God, that thereby either impenitence or despair be caused or strengthened." (FC SD XI 12)

It has been said in advance that all the theses are taken literally from the Formula of Concord, because it is primarily a matter of explaining what the doctrine of our Evangelical Lutheran Church actually is; although of course this is also our faith and confession, since we are Lutherans.

It was further remarked: Here our Formula of Concord gives a general rule by which every doctrine which is claimed to be a doctrine of the divine word is to be judged; and with it at the same time a mark of what is certainly not a biblical doctrine, a touchstone by which the test can be made. If an allegedly biblical doctrine does not stand this test, it is certainly not taken from Scripture, even if it may always seem so. No matter how much ingenuity, even with a hundred Bible verses, someone may want to prove that a doctrine is in Scripture, but what he teaches does not agree with this

general rule, every Christian can say to him: "Your doctrine is false, it was devised by the devil and your sinful flesh, which is subject to error. For the Holy Spirit himself has given this rule." **<AGtG 240>** This is of the utmost importance, for according to it even the most simple-minded Christian, indeed, we would say, every child, can judge the most difficult doctrine as to whether it is a divine doctrine or not. Thus St. Paul writes in 2 Timothy 3:16: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness"; and Romans 15:4: "But whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." Hereby the apostle testifies that every divine teaching must be of such a nature that it does not make man secure in his sins; but just as little must it plunge the poor sinner who desires to be saved into despair. God is a holy God, therefore the teaching that reinforces sin and makes it safe cannot come from him. But God is also love, abounding in grace and mercy; therefore it is impossible for a doctrine to come from him which does not give comfort to the poor man who is troubled by his sin, but on the contrary plunges him into despair.

The Formula of Concord therefore also writes: "Whoever teaches the doctrine of God's gracious choice in such a way that the afflicted Christians cannot be comforted by it, but are thereby caused to despair, while the impenitent are strengthened in their courage: then it is undoubtedly certain and true that this doctrine is not practiced according to the word and will of God, but according to the reason and instigation of the wicked devil. For, as the apostle testifies: 'All things that are written are written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures may have hope. But since such comfort and hope are weakened or even taken away from us by the Scriptures, it is certain that they are understood and interpreted contrary to the will and opinion of the Holy Spirit." (Repetition. Art. XI, p. 724.)

As important as the golden rule is, which Paul gives in the words: "If any man have prophecy, let it be according to faith" (Rom. 12:7), since it preserves all those who search the Scriptures from error, likewise every doctrine has its touchstone in it, whether it serves for correction and comfort or not. It is by this that we must now also test the doctrine which our Lutheran church sets forth as the biblical doctrine of election by grace; not as if we first wanted to become certain of the truth — oh no, we are certain — but so that we may be strengthened more and more in this Lutheran faith of ours from the Scriptures; for the Lutheran church is the true Bible church.

Olearius writes about this passage: "The following rules are to be noted from the

26 [1879 Western District essay by Walther]

Formula of Concord: 1. it is certain that the whole of Holy Scripture is not presented to us to nourish security or impenitence, but to punish, to instruct to **<AGtG 241>** righteousness and improvement of life. This is shown in 2 Timothy 3:16: 'All scripture is profitable for doctrine,' etc., from which it is evident that the article revealed by God concerning the election of grace is not to be presented in such a way as to produce security in sin, but rather to improve the hearer. 2. It is certain that everything that is presented to us in the Scriptures was not revealed to drive us to despair, but that we might have hope through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures. This is proved from Romans 15:4, where it is shown that the purpose of divine revelation is not despair but consolation. Thus a doctrine of election which causes either impenitence or despair cannot be a true and sound one." (*J. B. Carpzovii Isagoge in libb. symb. Opus posthum. a J. Oleario ed. p. 16 sq.*).

If I have to say to a troubled person: this doctrine is not for you, I will hold up a completely different one for you, so that you will not fall into despair, this is proof that my doctrine is useless; likewise, if I have to say to a person who is living godlessly: this doctrine is not for you, it only makes you more godless, it is obvious that my doctrine is false. For it must be such that the godless can hear it just as well as the pious, without harming anyone.

Of course, a person can also fall into impenitence or despair through the right teaching, if he abuses it, as we shall see later; but this is not the issue here.

Evidently our General Rule has been placed at the head of the Formula of Concord for the sake of the Calvinists. As is well known, they teach an absolute, i.e. unconditional, election, not only to salvation, but also to damnation. They say that from eternity God has made a choice among the people he wanted to create, without any consideration, and has determined that some will go to heaven and be saved, while others will go to hell and be damned. With the latter he will do whatever will bring them to heaven, but the latter must go to hell, they may do as they please. God has decided for them: I will send them my Son, who will save them; I will also give them my Holy Spirit through the word, who will compel them to believe. I will even keep them in the faith by compulsion, that they should and must be saved, they may do as they please. Even if they live ungodly lives, I will not hold this against them, but will ensure that a little bit of faith always remains in them.

27 [1879 Western District essay by Walther]

On the other hand, God has decided about the others: I will not send my Son into the world to them, he shall not redeem them; when the word is preached to them, I will not give them my Holy Spirit, for they shall not be brought to faith through the word. I offer them my grace outwardly, as I do to others — for since men cannot know who is elect, the word must be preached to all, so that the elect may receive God's grace — but I will not save them. On the contrary, so that I can show what a holy and righteous God I am, who condemns those who have sinned against the law, I will not **<AGtG 242>** only cause them to sin and make them sin, but I will also have my word preached to them so that their sin, and thus their condemnation, will be even greater. This is the terrible teaching of the Calvinists and all strict Reformed, which must necessarily lead either to carnal security or to despair.

That this leads to despair is attested by John Gerard, who writes: "From this it is clear why the absolute judgment of rejection is rightly called a rope of despair. *) [* The absolute judgment is the one according to which God has decided to exclude a number of people from salvation, no matter what they want to do.] For if someone were to doubt whether God's grace and Christ's merit also apply to him, such a person cannot be referred to the inner testimony of faith, because that doubt is most contrary to the feeling of faith. Nor can the opponents refer such a person to the Word and the sacraments, because they say that 'to people rejected by an absolute decree, the Word is offered not for the purpose of converting them, but for the purpose of increasing their damnation.' Thus Beza writes in his reply to the Colloquium p. 96: "Th+ose whom God has not chosen, even if they were baptized a thousand times with the outward baptism of water, would still never be given faith or Christ"; thus Beza speaks in the Colloquium p. 465.

"Calvin writes against Heshusius: 'The unworthy and rejected do not receive Christ's body, because he was not given into death for them, nor Christ's blood, which was not shed for them.' What, then, is left for that miserable, afflicted person to raise himself up when he says that he does not feel faith, that therefore God's grace and Christ's merit have nothing to do with him, and that he is therefore in the number of the rejected? **We** answer from the word of God that God wants him to believe, and that for this purpose God has offered him his grace and Christ's merit in word and confirmed them by the seal of the sacraments. But the adversaries cannot comfort him, because they hold that

unbelief depends on that absolute counsel; therefore some do not believe because they are absolutely reprobates; but **we** proceed thus, saying that some are reprobates because they **will** not believe; God therefore earnestly desires that he also, the troubled one, should believe, lest through his own fault he should join the number of the reprobate.'" (*Loc. de elect. § 182*.)

A Calvinist cannot comfort an oppressed person; on the contrary, he plunges him deeper and deeper into despair. The latter thinks he has no faith; but the Calvinist teaches that the elect feel faith in their hearts. For they do not base it on the Word and Sacrament, as we do according to Scripture, **<AGtG 243>** but say: by this you can know whether you are elect, that you feel faith in your heart. So if he really wants to bring comfort, he must change his teaching, or he will only plunge the poor afflicted person into even greater despair. He cannot call out to him: Remember what I have preached to you; I have brought you the grace of God through the gospel. For he will then answer him: You yourself have taught that the gospel is preached to those who are rejected, but not so that they may receive the Holy Spirit and faith; now I do not have the Holy Spirit, so I must be one of those who are rejected.

The Calvinists even teach that even among the children there are absolute reprobates, who therefore do not receive faith even if they are baptized. How we must thank God that we are Lutherans! How powerfully and surely we can comfort the oppressed! We can call out to him: You believe in the Lord Jesus, how can you think that you belong to the damned? or: You have been baptized, you have heard the gospel that proclaims grace to the whole world, so you can also take comfort in the grace of God! Yes, that is a profound consolation. We know that even if a Christian does not feel his faith, he still has it, for faith by its very nature is not a feeling, but a turning to Christ with confidence. If a man's heart is so set on Christ that he sighs, "Oh Lord Jesus, if you do not help me, I am lost," he certainly has faith, even if he feels nothing in his heart but blasphemy. Yes, even for the one who says in his temptation: I have no faith at all, God has denied it to me, even for him we still have consolation. For we can call out to him: well, if you do not have faith, you can still receive it, and that at this moment; for if I now preach to you the precious gospel of Christ, the Savior of sinners, I do so because God has commanded it so; and he has commanded it so that all sinners may believe, therefore only believe! Now I bring him a number of Bible verses which teach that man should believe; and then the

troubled person must finally say: yes, the devil must have completely blinded me: but I thought I could not be saved; after all, it says here that all men are redeemed and shall have life through faith in Christ; I am one of them. This is Lutheran consolation; no papist, no Calvinist, no fanatic can give it; for all these do not point the poor sinner to the word of the Gospel. Indeed, the Calvinists teach in clear and plain words that God created the reprobate only in order to have people to cast into hell. Admittedly, not everyone teaches this in such a crude way, but only because the people are horrified by such things, through which God is made into a true monster. But some who do not come out with it have it in their hearts, for their leaders speak so with dry words.

John Gerhard also testifies that the Calvinist doctrine of absolute election leads to carnal security in the following words: "That the doctrine of the absolute election of some also feeds carnal security, we prove in this way: 1. If God, in his eternal and unchangeable counsel of election, has taken absolutely no account of true faith in Christ, whose forerunner is contrition and whose successor is good works, but has elected some to salvation by **<AGtG 244>** his absolute will, why then is it necessary to be concerned about true repentance, about true faith in Christ, about the diligence of a new obedience? If we occupy a place in the number of those absolutely chosen, then God himself, who has taken that absolute decision of election, will carry it out, for 'who can resist his will? If the final end, namely eternal salvation, is determined for us by an absolute decree of God, then God himself will certainly be concerned about the means by which he leads us to that final end, even if we are not particularly concerned about these means. 2. We cannot fall from God's grace again, however great our sins, so why should we be anxious to avoid them? Calvin teaches: 'As long as we retain the grace of election, no sins are imputed to us.' (*Institutes III, 4. § 28.*) But that grace of election is absolutely unchangeable, and to whom it once comes, it never departs. 3. If faith, once received, cannot be lost again by sins against conscience, why is it necessary to be so preoccupied with fleeing sins? As long as we keep the faith, no sins can harm us; but now the faith of him to whom it is once given is never lost, not even in the most grievous sins! 4. If we obtain an absolute and unconditional certainty of constancy, why is it necessary for us to ask God for the gift of constancy with such earnest and

fervent prayers, why do we strengthen our faith by such persistent and daily meditation on the Word, why do we resist the lusts of the flesh with such great zeal, why do we devote ourselves so much to good works? What God has begun in us without us, he will also bring to completion according to his unchangeable and infallible counsel, and introduce us by his unchangeable will into the heavenly joys to which he has chosen us by an absolute counsel. "We do not see," say the Remonstrants (*in Collat. Hag. p. 340*), "that this doctrine of the constancy of faith in those who have once believed is a ground of comfort to the children of God, but hold that by its nature and constitution it is apt to implant security in men, so that in the midst of their course of sin it is a resting-place for them, in order that they may softly cherish and pleasantly flatter themselves, and thus be comforted." (*Disput. academ. I*, 490. ff.)

If God has once decided that the elect may live as they please, but I will bring them to heaven, then everyone must also think when he hears this teaching: "Well, if I no longer have faith, or if I think I have none, it does no harm; God will see to it that it remains in a hidden corner of my heart. The Calvinists not only teach that Peter retained his faith when he denied the Lord and conspired and cursed himself three times, but that even David, when he fell into murder **<AGtG 245>** and adultery, remained a true believing child of God. His faith had continued to glow like a spark under the ashes, even though nothing of it was visible on the outside. Yet the prophet himself calls out to him that he is a child of death, that is, of damnation, and will be eternally lost if he does not repent. When the poor people hear this, they cannot but become carnally assured. Now we know that God must do everything to save us; he must give us his Son, his Word, his Spirit and faith. No one gets to heaven by doing anything; eternal life is a free gift of God; but we have this terrible power, that we can earn our damnation, we can deprive ourselves of salvation. We cannot work, earn, work for and fight for the latter; but we can shamefully and wickedly forfeit it. That is why God so often calls out to us: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling!" Not because we should bring about our salvation through such work, but because we can so easily lose our salvation through our own fault. On the other hand, Calvin expressly teaches that no matter how much we sin, we cannot fall from the faith if we are elected; but as long as we retain the grace of election (and this happens at all times according to God's

counsel), no sins are imputed to us; indeed, we need not worry at all if we fall into sin, for God nevertheless sustains us in the faith.

A curious example in this respect is the famous Oliver Cromwell, who gradually rose to become a so-called Protector of England. He was a strict Presbyterian, also adhered to the Puritans, but was a wild Enthusiast and enemy of the government, who finally brought it about that Charles I of England was executed. Before he was to sign the death warrant, he had suffered terrible torment in his conscience; then he knelt down and prayed in his Enthusiast spirit, and suddenly he felt quite well. From this he rapturously concluded that it would be pleasing to God if the king were to be executed. When the Parliament was assembled for the signature, and his conscience was also troubled, Cromwell signed with great pleasure, and then, in his exuberance, splashed his neighbor's face with ink. For a time he also agitated for the abolition of the ministry of preaching; for he thought that Christians, and especially the elect, had the Spirit and the Bible, and that was enough.

The historian Wernicke writes of him: "Oliver Cromwell (died 1658), Protector of England, asked his chaplain on the night before his death whether it was possible to fall from grace. When he replied in the negative, he exclaimed: 'Then good for me, for I know for certain that I was once in grace'." (The History of the World by Dr. C. Wernicke. Berlin 1871. III, 408 f.)

Was that not a terrible consolation? This chaplain has consigned the poor soul to hell by this accursed doctrine that once a man is in grace he cannot fall from it again. Even a godless child of the world, who was formerly converted, still remembers the time when he was under grace; instead of leading him to repentance, the Calvinists plunge him into carnal security and thus into hell.

Jeremias Nicolai also describes in a moving way from his own experience that the Calvinist doctrine of predestination leads to despair, as can be read in Heerbrand's *Compendium theologiae*. **<AGtG 246>** In the same way, the Baptist John Bunyan, the well-known author of "Pilgrim’s Progress", an interesting and edifying book, but mixed with Reformed leaven, lay ill for years with the false doctrine of predestination of the Calvinists — for the Baptists were formerly strict Calvinists, and in part still are. When he was in such dire straits that he no longer knew which way was up, an old, torn but still complete book came into his hands, of which he could see that many a tear had already fallen on its pages. It was the English translation of Luther's Epistle to the Galatians. Knowing that Luther had been an extraordinarily famous man, he began to read it,

and the deeper he got into it, the brighter he was illuminated by grace, until he was completely freed from all his temptations. He confessed that, after the Bible, this book was without doubt the best that existed in the world, for none was so easy to heal a wounded conscience. A Baptist had to confess this! —

Here too, as we shall see later, we must be careful not to regard as unbiblical a doctrine which only appears to lead to despair but does not actually do so. Still less should we think that it is better to conceal the doctrine of the election of grace altogether, because it might be misunderstood and thus, through no fault of its own, plunge us into terrible doubts. Oh no, for then God would contradict Himself, since it is expressly stated that "all Scripture, inspired by God, is profitable for doctrine" etc., and again that "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning" etc. We should therefore not only teach this doctrine in preaching, no, also in teaching Christians, and even in private pastoral care. But even more beware of trying to clear away the unfathomable depths that the doctrine of election of grace contains, in the false opinion of wanting to protect hearts from security and despair! Whoever clears away these depths clears away the doctrine itself. Only in this doctrine alone does God show that he is not such a God as can be seen to the bottom, but a hidden God, before whom one should and must exclaim with the holy apostle: "Oh, what a depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how utterly incomprehensible are his judgments and inscrutable his ways!" Thank the devil that you want to bring a doctrine other than the one God has given to make people pious. Since God has given us the doctrine of the election of grace, only preach it confidently; it does not make anyone safe or desperate; but if it happens, the other person alone is to blame. He has then gone too deeply into this mystery, which God has forbidden. For God does not want us to search where he has not revealed himself to us. Rather, we should let what God has concealed stand; we should not deny it, but let it stand and think: the day is coming when God will also show us how this is connected. Let Luther be our example in this too! When he has people before him who are troubled about the election of grace, he conceals nothing about it; indeed, he often speaks very boldly in order to give them all the comfort of Scripture; but his boldness **<AGtG 247>** never goes beyond the Word of God. This he gives, on this he stands firm, even if it seemed that the whole world would be lost over it; for he knows that it is not God's fault, but only the godless world.

Luther writes: "A few days ago my dear brother, Caspar Creuziger, Doctor of the Holy Scriptures, mournfully reported to me

how he understood from your friends in the various visitations that you were entangled with strange thoughts concerning God's providence and were completely confused by them, that you were as it were deaf and shattered by them and finally worried that you would tear off and shorten your own life with your own fist; for which God Almighty would protect you; and that you would also discover and tell me in part what your thoughts and your intentions were. These would be your propositions and complaints, that God Almighty may know from eternity who shall be saved or will be saved, whether they are dead, alive or yet to come. This is true and should and must be admitted, for he knows all things and nothing is hidden from him; because he has counted and knows the drops in the sea, the stars in the sky, the roots of all trees, branches, twigs, leaves, and all the hairs of men. From this you finally conclude: you do what you want, good or evil, but God knows whether you are to be saved or not; which is true; and yet you think more of damnation than of salvation, and hesitate about it, not even knowing how God is disposed towards you, and therefore become very fainthearted and completely deluded. Therefore, as a servant of my dear Lord Jesus Christ, I am writing you this report and consolation so that you may know how God Almighty is disposed towards you, whether you are destined for salvation or damnation. God Almighty, even though he knows all things and all works and thoughts in all creatures must be done according to his will (*juxta decretum voluntatis suae*), yet his earnest will and mind, even command, is determined from eternity to make all men blessed and partakers of eternal joys, as Ezek. 18, 23, where he says: 'God does not want the sinner to die, but to repent and live. Therefore, since he wants to save and have the sinners who live and hover everywhere under the wide, high heaven, let your foolish thoughts, inspired by the devil, not separate you and separate you from the graces of God." (Consolation against temptation from the Providence of God, *Anno 1528. X*, 2036 f. [StL 10, 1737 ff.; not in *Am. Ed.*; see Currie translation **here**.])

Consider this: the troubled man was contemplating suicide; he was in the greatest distress. Nevertheless, Luther does not deny to him a shred of the doctrine which, through no fault of its own, had brought him to this despair.

The troubled man thinks: "If God knows that I am going to hell, then I will go there, I may do what I want; the number of the elect cannot increase or decrease; what God knows beforehand must also happen. If I am not one of the elect, I can listen to God's word as diligently as I like, be absolved, take **<AGtG 248>** communion, but all is lost." What does Luther answer? "That

is true and must be admitted." He does not give him any other gospel, he leaves him stuck in this truth, for that would be the devil's gospel, which would contradict the Word of God. But now he also comes with his general message, with the comfort of the gospel, and says: "But if you therefore think that you are condemned, these are your thoughts; God does not have such thoughts, for God wants all men to be saved. He has clearly revealed this so that you may believe it. If all men shall be saved, then you know that you shall be saved too, for you are one of them. It is something quite wonderful how purely, powerfully and comfortingly Luther teaches the universality of God's grace; therefore it is a shameful blasphemy of Luther to say, which also occurs here in America, that Luther was a particularist, i.e. that he denied the universality of God's grace, while no one emphasized it so powerfully as he did. Everyone notices, for example, in the quotation read out, that this doctrine flows like a stream from Luther's pen, or rather from Luther's heart.

Just as the doctrine of election by grace must not be changed in order to prevent a person who is troubled from falling into doubt, so it must not be changed because people abuse it. For what we hear from the Calvinists, that people are so godless and say: "Oh, I am chosen, now there is no need for me, I can sin and still be saved", also occurs in the Lutheran Church. This should not surprise us, for wherever the pure doctrine of the divine word is taught, it is always misused by some. Even the apostles had to experience this; even Paul had to complain that his proclamation of justification was taken in vain. Even then there were people who said: if it is so, that nothing depends on our works with regard to our salvation, then we can live as we like; yes, on the contrary, the more we sin, the brighter and more abundantly God's grace can be revealed to us; therefore let us do evil, that good may come of it (Rom. 3:7-8). But did Paul allow such a shameful, ungodly, even diabolical abuse of that golden doctrine to determine him to change it or even to abridge and diminish it in the slightest? No, he presented it in the same purity, sweetness and sweetness as before; the children of God need it; and the ungodly are not helped by a change of doctrine; if the pure doctrine does not help them, the counterfeit one helps them even less. Paul has only the terrible judgment for them: "Which condemnation is quite right." Let us therefore not be surprised if there are even now such godless boys who say: "Oh, if that is the case, that the elect must be saved, then we also adhere to this doctrine and live as we please." You wretched

man! God has not given you this teaching to think like this. There is no trace that the doctrine of the election of grace, if taught correctly, would cause you to live in all shame and vice. In Christ we are chosen for sanctification, as the apostle says. Nowhere is it written that a man should go up to heaven and open God's book and look into it to see if his name is written in it, and then come down again and say: now I know I am an elect person, now I live as I please; yes, yes, I have read it, Hinz and Kunz, you are in it too. And God is always at home, so you can't look into the book even in his absence. Rather, God has said: go into the Bible, there I will **<AGtG 249>** tell you whether I have chosen you; there see what I have said about repentance and faith and justification and regeneration; my elect live in constant repentance, walk in sanctification; there you can find out whether you are an elect or not. Whoever tries otherwise, says Luther, will bring down on his neck. That is why we do not need to change the doctrine of election by grace for the sake of abuse, any more than we need to change the doctrine of justification for the sake of abuse. Many, even in our churches, abuse it and think: if works do not help us to salvation and God does not ask anything about them, then I do not want to torment myself so much, but make myself comfortable with sanctification. And even if they don't say it outright, you can see it in their whole nature. None of us will now think: I must keep this teaching quiet for a few years or not preach it at all. If we did, we would be godless people. No doctrine, neither the law nor the gospel, can be properly preached to the carnally minded; they cannot be saved; the dear children of God always hear the gospel with a thousand joys, not in order to live safely, but in order to sacrifice their whole lives to God with thanksgiving. This fruit produces the doctrine of justification; this fruit also produces the doctrine of election. Therefore preach it confidently! Do not change them, do not conceal them, but do not cut off the tips of them either! The dear children of God must know that they are chosen, for they need this strengthening for their struggle with the world, the flesh, the devil and hell, for their cross and their temptations, so that the Lord says: "No one shall snatch them out of my hand." Let them therefore be sure and certain of their choice of grace!

Chemnitz also writes: "The reply to the fact that many abuse this doctrine for security is that the true doctrine must not be changed for the sake of abuse, but that Paul's commandment to rightly divide the Word of God must be observed. For the impenitent are not presented with these consolations, but

with those thunderbolts (Ephesians 5, Galatians 5, Colossians 3, 1 Corinthians 6): "Those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God". But to those who in their fears and terrors flee by faith to the throne of grace, we do not present doubt, but certain and sure consolation from the promise of the gospel. But because even in believers there is still flesh and spirit, old and new man, those emphatic reminders are also inculcated that they must not misuse the promise of the gospel to strengthen the security and will of the flesh; but those who despise those emphatic reminders and misuse this teaching should consider what is written in 2 Peter 3: "They turn the Scriptures to their own condemnation."" (*Examen Concil. Trid. ed. Genevens. fol. 173 b.*) **<AGtG 250>**

The Roman doctrine of purgatory is one of those teachings whose falsity is immediately recognized from the fact that it inevitably leads to despair if it is seriously believed to be true. According to it, everyone who is not completely cleansed of sin in this life goes to purgatory, and it is impossible to know how long he will have to remain there. No one who is not completely blinded by the devil will say that he is completely pure, that there is not one root of sin left in his heart. Therefore, among the millions of Catholics who are Catholic in their hearts, there will hardly be one who does not believe that he will go to purgatory when he dies. They therefore all die with fear and terror. One must not be deceived by the fact that among the Romans many die quite calmly; they consider the whole papacy to be humbug, or they put that doctrine out of their minds. In addition, the papists teach that the torments of purgatory are just as terrible as those of hell; the only difference between them is that purgatory comes to an end on Judgment Day, while hell lasts forever. Now ask yourself: can a man who is not reprobate and believes in purgatory be full of consolation for one hour of his life? If a man knew that he was to burn at the stake for a quarter of an hour, like Huss, he would be terrified, he would live in constant fear; but the Romans teach that people often have to languish in purgatory for a hundred, even more than a thousand years before they are fully matured. Likewise, the falsity of the Roman doctrine of indulgences is recognized by the fact that it leads to carnal security. For according to this doctrine, one can buy indulgences, i.e. forgiveness of sins, with money, and not only for sins committed, no, also for sins to be committed. Truly, the devil and Antichrist could not have done anything more atrocious; they could not have betrayed each other better. Luther experienced how this doctrine drove to impenitence; for when he instructed and exhorted the blinded to desist from their sins, they would not do so, but held their letters of indulgence before him; for they had bought their

freedom to sin for their good money. Others again did not want to repent of their sin, because they thought they already had forgiveness. Truly, this teaching was invented precisely to keep people in sin. In the same way, the Methodist doctrine of entire sanctification makes some secure and others desperate, for those who think they have attained it now think they no longer need repentance, and those who do not have it think they are not real Christians. In the same way, the Calvinist doctrine of absolute predestination evidently leads partly to certainty and partly to despair; to certainty in those who think they are elected, to despair in those who think they are not elected.

We can also see the correct use of the doctrine of election by grace from a testimony of the great interpreter of Scripture, Sebastian Schmidt, who writes of the ultimate purpose and effects of election by grace as follows:

"The final purpose of predestination, and indeed the last, is the glory of God, or, as the apostle Ephes. 1:6, 12 says, the praise of his grace and the praise of his glory. The subordinate and indirect (final) ends are the eternal salvation of the predestinated, victory and non-separation from the love of God in Christ and comfort Romans 8:28, 31, 35, 38, 39, as well as sanctification of life; but by no means either security or despair of men, Romans 11:20, 23, 24. **<AGtG 251>** The best distinction of the effects (of election) is that between general and proper. These (the proper effects) are the endurance to the end (*finalis perseverantia*) and eternal life (which we have just reckoned among the final ends); but those (the general effects) are those which do not flow from mere predestination, and are not granted to the predestinated alone, but which by other causes, even to the exclusion of this predestination, happen even to the rejected, namely, from general grace and its means by virtue of the antecedent will. Matt. 20:16; Heb. 16:4-5. Just as constancy, although it has become the property of the predestined by virtue of the subsequent will, has nevertheless been promised and offered earnestly according to the previous will even to the rejected: so calling, justification, and other common effects, although they are also offered and conferred on the rejected, proceed no less simultaneously from the counsel of predestination, both on the ground of an affect moving to compassion (*ratione reflexionis affectus*), and on the ground of a more abundant grace (*amplioris gratiae*), which is sometimes added to common grace, not that it may make it (first) effectual, but that it may make it more glorious

*(magis illustrena faciat*). And so it can be said of man, with Luther, that he is predestined to faith itself, not only in the general meaning of the word, according to which God has decided beforehand to do and give everything that he does and gives, but also in the *special* meaning that it has in this article (*hujus loci*). Rom. 8:29, 30. Ephes. 1:4." (*Aphorismi th. Disp. § 23-25. p. 297. sq.*)

Note: Sebastian Schmidt does not call the enduring constancy of faith a condition or an ordinance of predestination, as is now generally taught, and as it may be called in a certain sense, but the reverse: an effect of it.

Furthermore, Sebastian Schmidt says that God gives more grace to the elect than to the non-elect. God does indeed give all men a certain amount of grace, namely so much that they can be saved; the fact that many are nevertheless not saved is due to their willful and stubborn resistance, as Stephen said to the High Council: "You stubborn ones . . you always resist the Holy Spirit, just as your fathers did, so do you." If God gives the elect the grace of constancy, the non-elect have no right to accuse God of not also giving them this rich measure of grace, for God does not owe us a special, greater measure of it. If anyone wanted to do this, God would reproach him with the words of Scripture: "Have I not power to do what I will with my own? Do you look askance that I am so kind?" Paul is a clear example of this rich measure. He had fought against the Christians in a very nefarious way. He tried to bring them to blasphemy by leading them to death; and behold! he is converted, and in a **<AGtG 252>** most wonderful way: Christ himself appears to him, talks to him and tells him where he should go in order to experience the way of salvation. This is obviously a "*gratia amplio*", a greater grace than God gives to others, through which he wants to glorify his goodness. The fathers of the household act in a similar way. Some of them are kinder to one child than to another, because it follows him better and gives him more pleasure than the other; he also gives the latter food and drink, and also gives him much pleasure, but he shows this and that love to the former more than to the latter. God deals with us in the same way, except that he does not even ask whether we have followed him or not, but does as he wills. -

Finally, Sebastian Schmidt also says that one can speak with Luther of predestination to faith. Many dogmatists do not want to accept this expression. They do not want faith to be described as a fruit, but rather as a cause of predestination; and they do this because the Reformed maintain that

God takes no account at all of faith, but just as a king, at his own discretion, orders some of the conscripts of his country to serve as soldiers and lets the others go home again, so also God, according to pure arbitrariness, has held such a muster among men, choosing some and rejecting others. But by the expression "God predestines to faith" Schmidt does not mean to denote this arbitrariness with Luther, for that would be an ungodly doctrine; but this: that the good God makes it so that one remains in faith is only because God has chosen him from eternity for salvation. And this is rightly said; for if God did not do this, no man would remain in the faith. If God did not take our salvation into his hands, we would soon forfeit and lose it.

Quenstedt writes similarly: "The final purpose of election with regard to the elect is either an indirect one, namely the knowledge and the prize of divine grace, 1 Pet. 2:9.or the ultimate, namely, glory, blessedness and eternal life, not as it still depends on subtle causes, for it is undecided (*contingens*), but as it is certainly foreseen and foreknown in the divine mind and, according to this foreknowledge, is prepared from eternity for those who will constantly believe. Matt. 25:34: 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' Acts 13:48: "And they believed, as many of them were ordained to eternal life." (*Th. did.-pol. P. III. c. 2. s. 1. th. 17. f. 28*.)

This, then, is the final purpose of election, that I may be saved, and that I may already here be assured of my salvation. For if election were nothing more than God knowing who will be saved, God would not have needed to reveal this to us in the first place, for it is already known to us from the fact that God is omniscient. Rather, this foreknowledge is one according to which God has graciously decided to save us.

Seb. Schmidt therefore says: "Nor does the same faith grasp the good of predestination, as it grasps the good of justification, sanctification, etc., so that it makes predestination its own, in which way the believer obtains his **<AGtG 253>** justification through faith, but from predestination it comforts and strengthens his faith, so that he says with the apostle: 'If God is for us, who can be against us? *(Aphorismi theol. Disp. 34. p. 295*.)

# Thesis II.*)

*) Minutes of Pastor Hein.

"This also belongs to the further explanation and salutary use of the doctrine of God's foreknowledge [predestination] for salvation (*de divina praedestinatione electorum ad salutem*): because only the elect

will be saved, whose names are written in the book of life, how one can know, from which and whereby one can recognize which are the elect who can and should accept this doctrine for consolation. And of this we are not to judge according to our reason, nor according to the law, nor from some outward appearance." (FC SD XI 25-26)

From our first thesis we learned a general rule by which any doctrine which is claimed to be a divine word can be tested to see whether it can really be one revealed by God; and we see that it certainly is not, if it is of such a nature that it either causes despair in the man who is grieved over his sin, or if it produces carnal certainty. We are now gradually making the application to this first canon and approaching our task.

In this 2nd Thesis the right use of the doctrine of the election of grace is now shown, which consists, of course, in taking comfort in this doctrine and allowing it to have such an effect on oneself that one becomes a good Christian. This use must not be based 1) on our reason, 2) on the law, 3) on any outward appearance.

The first thing we learn from this thesis is that our church confesses that it is possible to know and recognize who are the elect. Not that one can know it for certain from another, but that one should know it for certain about oneself. This does not mean that anyone who is not certain that he belongs to the elect is not a Christian, for whoever believes in Christ is a Christian. But we should also lead a Christian to the point where he becomes certain of his salvation. But whether I say: I am certain of my salvation, or: God has chosen me, is the same thing. For it is said here: "because only the elect will be saved, whose names are written in the book of life." Therefore, if I know that I am a saved person for Christ's sake, by grace, then I also know that I am chosen. For election by grace is no other mystery than the mystery of God's salvation of the poor sinner, which has its foundation in the eternal decree of God.

It does indeed say here: "the doctrine of God's providence for salvation"; but one must know that 300 years ago providence was actually used in the sense of election by grace, predetermination, predestination. And so that this is not forgotten, the Latin translation is: *de divina praedestinatione electorum* **ad** *salutem*. Providence here therefore does not mean as much as foreknowledge. For in the Formula of Concord it is said right at the beginning that one must distinguish **<AGtG 254>** between foreknowledge and election by grace or providence. Nor does it mean so much as *providence*, *providentia*, which consists in the fact that God

sustains the world and cares for and governs it. What is meant here is providence, i.e. that God already decided in eternity, and thus foresaw with certainty, who would be saved.

First of all, it is an abuse if one begins to speculate with reason and wants to find out with reason whether one is elect. Reason should not speculate in the things of God. It can only know as much as God has revealed. It should therefore merely say: Speak, Lord, I hear; let all the earth be silent before the Lord. Of course, it is often said, not without justification, that the election of grace is a very difficult doctrine. But it is actually easy. Difficult only for our reason. If we were to submit to God's words in a simple and childlike way, we would find no difficulty. We would then say: God is omnipotent, omniscient, he will do it the right way. But when we begin to speculate, we are sure to go astray. If we see that it does not rhyme, we must not think that it must be wrong. On the contrary, we must think: this is the eternal teaching of God, so it is no wonder that you cannot rhyme it with reason. If we could have reasoned it out, God would not have needed to reveal it to us. A Lutheran must hold this above all things: What God's Word says about a matter, I accept without further ado; I bow before the great God as a poor, blind sinner who receives his light from above alone, i.e. from the Holy Scriptures. Whether I can rhyme it or not, I do not ask, God will know how to rhyme it, who has revealed it.

Let us hear some testimonies against this, that one wants to be certain from reason whether one is chosen:

Formula of Concord: "Wherefore we judge of such election to eternal life neither from reason, nor from the law of God, which lead us either into a wild, desolate, epicurean life, or into despair, and awaken harmful thoughts in the hearts of men, that they think with themselves, nor can they rightly resist such thoughts as long as they follow their reason. If God has chosen me to salvation, I cannot be damned, I do what I will, and again, if I am not chosen to eternal life, it is of no avail what good I do, it is all in vain." (Epitome. Art. XI. p. 555.)

This is where man comes to when he wants to investigate the certainty of his election by reason. For one must well consider what our Confession says here, that one cannot quite resist such thoughts according to reason. Even the true Christian comes to such thoughts if he does not watch over himself and allow reason to speak. For there is a mystery here, and as soon as blind reason

judges it and does not simply accept it in faith, it cannot help but come up with nothing but horrible things. Here we have the application of our first rule: no doctrine may lead to **<AGtG 255>** despair, none to carnal certainty, or it is not from God. But now this doctrine leads to despair if it is judged according to reason; therefore reason should remain silent.

Chemnitz says the same thing: "The confidence that we shall be saved (*fiducia salutis nostrae*) does not rest on the fact that the perspicacity of our natural understanding could penetrate the heavens of the heavens by its perspicacity and investigate what has been decided about me in the secret counsel of the Trinity; but it rests on this ground, that God, proceeding from his secret light, has made his will manifest to us in word, as Paul 1 Cor. 2, that we have the mind of Christ." (*Examen Concil. Trid. Ed. Genev. fol. 168 a.*)

So we should not think: Who can search the mind of God? We should not even want to investigate it with reason. But praise God, he has revealed his mind to us. In the Gospel we have the mind of Christ. We should not think: How might God relate to me? Who can know that? We know that very well. And if someone asks: how can you know, have you seen God in your heart? then we can answer: yes, I have seen God in my heart. In the Bible, that's where I find it. So don't be so foolish as to think that temptation will come, that ungodly thoughts will enter your heart when you hear the doctrine of the election of grace. They only come when you allow yourself to be guided by reason. If, on the other hand, reason is silenced, they do not come, or are quickly overcome by faith, which only wants God to speak.

Luther: "There are many frivolous spirits who have not felt much about faith, who fall in, bump up against it, and first of all worry about this thing and want to find out through reason whether they are right, so that they can be sure where they stand. But stop this soon; it is not the time to do so." (Interpretation of the 2nd Ep. of St. Peter. On 2 Pet. 1, 10. IX, 846 f. [StL 9, 1353-4; AE 30:159])

For example, someone comes to church and hears the pastor preach about election by grace, and thinks: "So I must know whether I am elected. That is not the point. It is rather that one repents, believes in Christ, and so on. By this one can know what God has judged of him from eternity. Those who do otherwise start at the top; they want to build the house of their salvation and start at the gable. You have to start at the bottom, that is, with righteous repentance and conversion.

Luther: "Human reason conceives an unequal will of God, as if God were a tyrant, who has some companions whose

nature he allows to please him, be it good or not good, and on the other hand he hates the others; they do as they please. So one should not think of God's will." **<AGtG 256>**

Here Luther shows that one arrives at Calvinism through reason. As soon as reason hears that he who is elect is chosen by grace alone, that he could do nothing to it, it thinks: well, if this is so, God must not have wanted to save the others. If there is only grace here, then there must be God's free will there: they should not be saved. Reason thinks like Calvin: God has certain companions who may do as they please, they are his sons and daughters, he will bring them to heaven. And others may do what they want, they shall not go to heaven. One could get the idea: It seems that Calvin had a strong faith. After all, there are several scriptural passages that seem to indicate that there is absolute election and rejection. So it seems as if Calvin wanted to submit to God's Word unconditionally, and that is why he himself confessed this. But it is nothing but rationalism, it is mere reasoning. He brought up the doctrine simply because it fits into his system. It was based on the thought: God is an absolute being, can do and think what he wants, everything is right. He made God into an iron fate that sits enthroned above the world and deals with creatures entirely at will. In this respect Calvin is no better than the newer theologians, who construct a system for themselves, and the Holy Scriptures must then say yes to it.

> "This saying is eternally true, Ps. 5:6: 'You are not a God to whom ungodliness or sin is pleasing,' For though he accepts the saints who still have sin in them, he does not accept them without a great payment; Christ's blood must become a sacrifice for the sake of which God accepts and spares us, as long as we remain in faith and when we are in faith." (Martin Luther's and other theologians at Wittenberg Concerns about the sins of the elect. Anno 1536. $W^1$ X, 2001 [StL X, 1710; not in Am. Ed.])

Luther thus wants to say: it is certainly written in the Bible that God is a merciful God. But one must not conclude from this that to whom he wants to give his grace he gives it, but to whom he does not, he refuses it; God is gracious and grace has no law. Luther says: "No, God is indeed gracious, but he has not dispensed grace in such a way as to destroy justice. For when he wanted to have mercy on the whole world, his Son had to fulfill every letter of the law for all sinners. There he proved that his grace is not greater than his justice, nor his justice greater than his grace, for both are the good God himself.

44 [1879 Western District essay by Walther]

Luther: "I hear that now and then among those of the nobility and other great lords (*passim*) evil words are said to fall and be spread about the election or foreknowledge of God. For thus shall they speak: If I am elect (*praedestinatus*), whether I do good or evil, I shall be saved; but if I have not elect, I shall be condemned, regardless of my works. I would gladly argue at length against such ungodly words if I could do so for the sake of my health, of which I am not now almost certain. For if the words are true, as they seem to be, then the incarnation of the Son of God, his suffering and resurrection, **<AGtG 257>** and all that he did for the salvation and blessedness of the world, are thereby completely nullified and taken away." [Commentary on Genesis; StL 2, 174-5; AE 5:42]

Luther is saying that if the election of grace consisted in God saying that these should go to heaven and those to hell, then he would not have needed to send his Son into the world. If he had taken the power for himself (which he certainly had), why would he have given his Son, ordained the Word and Sacraments and instituted the ministry of preaching? He could have saved all that.

> "What use are the prophets and the whole of Holy Scripture to us? What use are the sacraments to us? For this reason, it is now incumbent upon us to reject and trample all this underfoot! These are devilish and poisoned arrows and are the very original sin itself, so that the devil deceived our first parents when he said, 'You will be like God: "You will be like God." Genesis 3:5."

The one who discerns God's counsel with reason makes himself God. Scripture says: "No one can fathom the depths of the Godhead except God himself. Even man is inscrutable to another if he does not come out with his speech. Isn't it terrible when wretched people want to look into God's heart with their reason? Then they see nothing but their own thoughts and pass them off as thoughts of God's heart.

> "For they were not satisfied with the divinity that was revealed to them, by which knowledge they were saved, but they wanted to penetrate into the depths of the divinity. For they reasoned with him thus: there must be some secret reason why God had forbidden them not to eat of the fruit of the tree which was in the midst of paradise, and they wanted to know that reason. Just as these people of the present time also speak of it: What God has provided must come to pass; therefore it is all uncertain and in vain that we should be much concerned about religion or the salvation of souls. But you are not commanded to make a judgment about it, for the judgment or judgment of God is unknowable. Why do you doubt

or reject the faith which God has granted you? For to what purpose did it serve that God sent his Son to suffer and be crucified for us? What good was it that he instituted the holy sacraments, if it is all uncertain and in vain for our salvation? For otherwise (*alioqui*) if anyone had been predestined, he would have been saved without the Son and without the sacraments or the Holy Scriptures. Therefore, according to these people's blasphemy, God must have been an abominable fool to have sent his Son, to have given the law and the gospel, and to have sent the apostles, if this is all he wanted, that we should be uncertain and still doubt whether we will be saved or damned."

**<AGtG 258>**

Luther does not mean to say that man should not be certain of his salvation; rather, he is saying that one wants to become certain by investigating it with reason, while on the contrary, one should investigate and recognize from what God does to one in time whether one is elected.

"But this is the devil's trick and deception, by which he presumes to make us doubtful and unbelieving, even though Christ came into this world to make us completely certain of salvation."

Note this testimony! Luther says: "This is the purpose for which Christ came into the world, that we might be assured of salvation. Or are we to be such wretched people who know now that they are in grace, but must think: who knows how it will turn out in the end? It is just as if someone were sitting in prison pardoned and knew: I am pardoned, but whether I will not be executed, I do not know. Such a message would make no prisoner happy. He would call out to the one who brought it to him: 'Go your way. This is how a preacher should make his parishioners certain of their salvation, not only for the moment but also for the future. But what kind of certainty this is, we will hear later, namely not an absolute, but an ordered certainty.

"For such a blasphemous opinion must finally be followed either by despair, or by contempt for God, the Holy Bible, baptism and all divine benefits, so that he would want to strengthen us against doubt, and that we should not be uncertain of our salvation. For the blasphemers will ultimately say with the Epicureans: Let us live, eat and drink in peace, for we will have to die tomorrow. They will, as the Turks are wont to do, fall into the sword and

fire with a free thirst, because (as they think) the hour is already determined in which you will either be laid low and slain or else escape." (On Gen. 26:9. II, 255-257.)

The Calvinists teach very similarly to the Turks. Their doctrine of God's predestination is nothing other than Turkish faith.

Jakob Heerbrand: "Whence must the doctrine of predestination be begun? Not from reason. For this is blind and clings to an absolute judgment of God, namely that those who are predestined to eternal life cannot be damned, but those who are not cannot be saved, they may now do as they please." (*Comp. th. p. 480*)

Luther: "We should therefore remember that God Almighty has not created us for perdition, but for salvation, and that He has provided us, as Paul testifies in Eph. 1:4, and that the providence of God must not begin with the law or reason, but with the grace of God and the gospel which is preached **<AGtG 259>** to all men. Luke 2:14." (Consolation against temptation before the providence of God. Anno 1528. X, 2041)

The following question was raised here: 'It has been remarked that the eternal election of grace is nothing else than "the eternal counsel of God for the salvation of men". Is this not precisely the position of those who do not entirely agree with our earlier report, who do not want to accept that God has made a particular election? who say that what is to be understood by the election of grace is the general counsel for salvation?

The answer was given: The opinion was that it is God's counsel concerning my salvation, not that of the whole world. God' has taken the decision to save me, that is my election of grace and nothing more. For if I am chosen, I am chosen for salvation. Of course, this requires a great deal. But the real point at issue is this: am I chosen to go to heaven one day? As the

Formula of Concord says: "This doctrine also gives the beautiful and glorious consolation that God is so concerned about the conversion, righteousness and salvation of every Christian, and that he has so faithfully meant it that before the foundation of the world was laid, he took counsel about it and decreed in his decree how he would bring **me** to it and keep me in it." (S. 714.)

Now just as we have a foundation of sand for the certainty of the election of grace if we base it on reason, so also, secondly, if we base it on the law. About this writes

Mamphrasius (died 1616 as superintendent in Wurzen): "The true opinion of predestination is not to be taken from the judgment

of our reason, which awakens the pernicious thoughts : if I am chosen, I shall not be able to be damned, whatever crimes I may commit; but if I am not chosen, it will not help me at all, however much good I may do. But it is to be learned and drawn from the word of God, and not from the law, which plunges all into despair because of disobedience; but from the gospel, for in it it is taught that God has decided everything under unbelief, so that he may have mercy on all (Rom. II, 32), and that he does not want anyone to be lost, but that everyone should turn to repentance (2 Pet. 3, 9) and believe in Christ." (*Erotemata in F. C. 1603. p. 116. sq.*)

Jacob Heerbrand: "Whence must the doctrine of predestination be begun? . Not from the law, according to which men hold that those whom God foreknew would be good, he elected to life, but those whom he foreknew would be evil, he rejected." (*Compend. th. p. 480.*)

So one must not say, as some do, that I base my election of grace on my behavior. As soon as one does so, he bases it on the law. And if God applied His standard to our behavior, we **<AGtG 260>** would be lost. No matter how righteously a man lives, God shows him that all his righteousness is nothing but a vile garment with which he cannot stand before God.

Luther: "From this we are to take briefly this doctrine, that salvation is not founded on our worthiness and merit, as the sophists pretend, since the devil could at any moment make it uncertain and overthrow it; but it stands in God's hand and is founded on his mercy, which is unchangeable and eternal; therefore it is also called God's salvation and is certain of it and cannot fail. Therefore, if your sin and unworthiness trouble you and it occurs to you that you are not provided for by God; item, the number of the elect is small, the number of the wicked great, and you are terrified by the horrible examples of divine wrath and judgment, etc., then do not argue for long why God does this or that in this way and not otherwise, if he could do good, etc. Also, do not presume to investigate the abyss of divine providence with reason, otherwise you will certainly go astray, either despair or even fall into the open; but hold fast to the promise of the Gospel." [cf. *StL* 9:1115; translation available by Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* 3:483-84.]

Whoever is in doubt about this should not go to the law, for there he is lost. For the law will tell him: you can never go to heaven, because you are a sinner. We must look to the Gospel for the answer to this question. But it also includes this: One should therefore not seek to recognize the election of grace from the law,

because one can easily mistake a pharisaical righteousness for a righteousness before God, thus darkening one's view and losing it. Therefore, one should not seek the election of grace in the law, because the law must condemn, but also because the hidden law can deceive one.

> "This (the promise of the Gospel) will teach you that Christ, the Son of God, came into the world to bless all nations on earth, that is, to redeem them from sin and death, to justify and save them, and that he did this by the command and gracious will of God, the heavenly Father, who so loved the world, etc. If you follow this advice, namely, if you first recognize that you are a child of wrath by nature, guilty of eternal death and damnation, from which no creature, neither human nor angelic, can save you, and then take hold of God's promise; If you believe that he is a merciful, truthful God, who faithfully keeps (by pure grace, without any fault or merit on our part) what he has ordained, and has therefore sent Christ, his Son, to do enough for your sin, and to give you his innocence and righteousness, and finally to redeem you from all kinds of misery and death, do not doubt that you belong among the elect, etc. If you act in this way (as St. Paul also does), it is **<AGtG 261>** comforting beyond measure. For those who take it otherwise, it is terrible." (Explanation of the 1st Ep. of St. Peter. On 1 Pet. 1:2. Erl. vol. LII, p. 5. f. [StL 9:1115; translation by Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* 3:484])

To him who examines himself according to reason or law, this doctrine is terrible. In the best case he comes to the conclusion that he says: I do not know whether I am chosen. But if he is serious about salvation, if he is a person who is in sorrow about his salvation, he will either despair and fall away, or he will throw everything into the open and fall away on the other side. But for those who view the election of grace as Paul does, it is very comforting. —

The third thing that the Formula of Concord says in our thesis is: "We should not judge of this from some outward appearance."

The main meaning of this is, no doubt, that we should not think that we are the elect if we are doing quite well in this life; nor should we think that we must be among the rejected if nothing seems to work out, if misfortune continues to pursue us, if one illness after another takes hold, if poverty and disgrace weigh us down. Yes, a poor person should not think: I am certainly one of the rejected, God has already withdrawn his hand from me here, he treats me as one with whom he is angry. But neither should one conclude, as happens only too often, because one is

not lacking in need, that I am God's dear child. And someone else who succeeds in everything he tries, who is rich, healthy, honored, should not think: well, I see it clearly, God looks down on me with favor; that is why he has put the seal on me before the whole world: you are my dear child and chosen. That is a foundation of sand. As it is said in a song:

Do not think in your heat of affliction,
That you are forsaken by God
And that God who sits in the bosom,
Feeds himself with constant happiness.

So the rich man in the Gospel may have judged himself. And when he died, he awoke in the flames of hell. Lazarus did not make such a judgment; he clung to God's grace and mercy. No doubt he had many temptations, and the devil may have whispered to him: Bless God and die; God loves the rich man, but he has forsaken you; God is your enemy; if you die, you will go to hell. How he must have struggled when he lay at the rich man's door, lest he despair! But no doubt he did not keep up appearances. He certainly thought: "You poor man in there, with your golden goblets, with your splendid robes, with your magnificent palace in which you live, I would not want to exchange places with you. I would rather lie with flocks at your door than revel and carouse with you on cushions. That will end in horror. And he thought of himself: oh my God, even if you were even harder on me, I would not fade away. This is the way you must lead me, that I may be saved; all things must be for the good of those who love God. **<AGtG 262>** This is how we too should do it; we should not think that when things go badly for us, God is angry with us. Or when things are good: God is pleased with me. It is not at all biblical to talk like this if you base it on the success of your actions. God only confesses something through his word. You have to say: God's word confesses my works.

But there are also fanciful characteristics by which one thinks one can recognize God's attitude. Methodists, for example, claim that Christ appeared to them and that they heard a voice from heaven. From this they conclude that they are completely converted and will certainly be saved and chosen. These are all sandy reasons. Because it can all be a lie and a deception.

Kahnis tells a curious story about this: When Herbert of Cherbury, the first deist of note, had completed his writing, "Of Truth as Distinguished from Revelation" (1624), he was full of doubt as to whether its publication would serve to glorify God. He writes: "So full of doubt I sat in my room on a

bright summer day. My windows were open to the south. The sun was shining brightly. Not a breath of air stirred. I took my book 'Of Truth' in my hand, threw myself on my knees and prayed devoutly in these words: 'O thou of all God, thou author of this light which now shines upon me, thou giver of all my enlightenment, I beseech thee, according to thine infinite goodness, to forgive me a greater petition than a sinner ought to make. I am not sufficiently convinced whether I may make this book known or not. If the publication of it is sufficient for your glorification, I pray you, give me a sign from heaven; if not, I will suppress it. I had hardly uttered these words when a loud and yet gentle roar came from heaven, like no sound on earth. This lifted me up and gave me such satisfaction that I thought my prayer had been answered." (The Inner Course of German Protestantism. Third Edition. I, 275. f.)

# Thesis III.

"Nor are we to presume to search the secret hidden abyss of divine providence, but to pay attention to the revealed will of God." (FC SD XI 26)

This is explained in another passage of the Formula of Concord as follows:

"Nor is this eternal election or decree of God to eternal life to be considered **merely** in the secret unsearchable counsel of God, as if it had no more in it, or no more belonged to it, nor were to be considered more in it, than that God should see beforehand which and how many should be saved, which and how many damned, or that he alone should hold such a pattern (*militarem quendam delectum instituerit*): this one shall be saved, that one shall be condemned; this one shall abide, that one.ushall not abide.... **<AGtG 263>** Therefore, if one is to think or speak of eternal election or of the predestination and ordinance of the children of God to eternal life rightly and with fruit, one should be accustomed not to speculate about the mere, secret, hidden, inscrutable providence of God, but as the counsel, counsel, purpose, and ordinance of God in Christ Jesus, which is the true book of life, is revealed to us through the Word, namely, that the whole doctrine of the purpose, counsel, will, and ordinance of God concerning our redemption, calling, righteousness, and salvation is fasted together, as Paul thus treats and explains this article Rom. 8:29 ff. Eph. 1:4 ff., as also Christ in the parable Matt. 22:1 ff." (Ebendas. p. 706. 707. [FC SD XI 9, 13])

This is particularly important, but must not be misunderstood.

51 [1879 Western District essay by Walther]

Because the Formula of Concord says that one should not merely look at providence, not delve into it, but should accept the whole counsel of God, some claim that the Lutheran Church therefore does not actually teach a personal election of grace, but that when it speaks of the election of grace, it means only the general counsel of salvation, the general love of God, calling, justification, sanctification, and preservation. But this is contrary to the clear Scriptures. For it says in Romans 8:30: "But those whom he has ordained, he has also called; those whom he has called, he has also justified; and those whom he has justified, he has also made glorious." All these things are distinguished from one another, one follows from the other. Or is calling election? Is justification election? Is glorification election? No, but it happens to those who are chosen. But the two are so interrelated that if I were to separate out election and consider it alone, I would have to come to this conclusion: if God has chosen some to be saved and others to be condemned, I cannot know whether I will be saved. I do not know which of the two councils concerns me. Or I speculate until I think: I have found it, and must either despair or become certain. No, when one speaks of election, one must include all the stages in which God wants to carry out the counsel of election to man. For God did not say: I have chosen a number to go to heaven, and that's the end of it. Rather, he has said what he will do with those whom he has chosen. He has loved them from eternity, sent his Son for the whole world, sends his Word and gives the Holy Spirit, gives them faith, justifies them, keeps them so that they remain in the faith, seeks them again when they stumble and fall away, and helps them over into eternal salvation. We must accept this. But if we accept this, we should not say: This is the matter we are dealing with. It would be wrong, for example, to preach about repentance insofar as it only contains repentance. We must also preach about faith. For repentance, even when wrought by the law, only has value if it is followed by the gospel and works faith. Thus it would also be an ungodly way to preach election by grace if one were to say: There is a mysterious counsel of God, which God has taken from eternity, that he wants to save a certain number of people; they will certainly be saved. Then there is another number of people who are condemned according to God's counsel, although not by God's counsel. **<AGtG 264>** Both numbers are determined, and they will never be more and never less. This is all true. And it would be a shameful way to preach if nothing more were said. The listeners would have to come up with all kinds of dangerous things. No, the whole counsel must be set out, then the doctrine of

election of grace becomes clear. That is the terrible thing about the Calvinists, they only talk about the mystery, and instead of pointing a listener to the Scriptures, they point him to reason, and then Calvinistic predestination comes out. But do not confuse the fact that this must be added according to the confessions of our Church, and that this is not the same as if she had said: there is no predestination. What a sin! God has revealed to us a religion which shows us how we can get to heaven, and now one of the most important doctrines, a doctrine dripping with comfort, is taken out of Holy Scripture. Woe to him who does this!

What kind of teachings these are, which are to be carried along at the same time, is also told us by the

Formula of Concord; it states the following 8 points:

"1. That the human race is truly redeemed and reconciled to God through Christ, who by his innocent obedience, suffering and death earned for us righteousness before God and eternal life.

"2. That such merits and good deeds of Christ are to be presented, offered and distributed to us through his Word and Sacrament.

"3. That through the Word, when it is preached, heard and meditated upon, he will be powerful and active in us with his Holy Spirit, converting hearts to true repentance and keeping them in the right faith.

"4. That he would justify all those who accept Christ in true repentance through right faith, and receive them into grace, adoption and inheritance of eternal life.

"5. That he would also sanctify in love those who are thus justified, as St. Paul says in Eph. 1.

"6. That even in their great weakness he will protect them against the devil, the world, and the flesh, and will govern and guide them in his ways when they stumble, and will lift them up again, comforting and sustaining them in crosses and temptations.

"7. That he will also strengthen and increase in them the good work he has begun, and preserve them to the end, where they keep God's Word, pray diligently, abide in God's goodness, and faithfully use the gifts they have received.

"8. That he will finally make those whom he has chosen, called and justified eternally blessed and glorious in eternal life." (S. 707. 708 [FC SD XI, 15-22; Trigl. p. 1069]) **<AGtG 265>**

All this must be presented; but it is not the election of grace. Now comes a proposition which is purposely not numbered as the last part of this doctrine; it rather first expresses the election of grace.

We must remind ourselves here that at our last Synod we did not intend to present the doctrine of election of grace systematically. Then, of course, we would have had to undertake the whole doctrine.

53 [1879 Western District essay by Walther]

We only intended to take out of this doctrine that which showed that the Lutheran Church, as in all others, so also in this doctrine gives all glory to God alone. It is therefore an unfair assessment of our report if this is not taken into consideration, since it is expressly stated that this is the point that matters to us. We have done the same with the other doctrines; we have not set them apart, but have shown in what respect they give all glory to God and all dishonor to man. This was also our purpose in the doctrine of the election of grace, and it is not true that we treated the whole doctrine as we believe it. We know as well as other people that there is much more to it. But neither will we allow ourselves to be persuaded that the other things that belong to it are the thing itself. We will not allow ourselves to be deprived of a precious teaching of the Word of God, and one of such importance that it goes back to eternity, where our salvation has been decided. No devil and no world shall rob us of it. And should we perish because of it, we will only perish physically. That is our main consolation!

After listing the eight points, we are told why these eight doctrines should be preached:

> "And in such His counsel, purpose and ordination God has not only prepared salvation in general, but has also considered (*clementer praescivit*) in grace all and every person of the elect who are to be saved through Christ, and has also decreed that He will bring, help, promote, strengthen and preserve them in this way, as now reported, by His grace, gifts and effects." (Ibid. p. 708.; [FC SD XI 23; Trigl. p. 1069])

Because God alone brings us to heaven in this way, according to the election of grace, the way must be described so that people do not think: it only depends on whether I am chosen; God has done this once, it can no longer be changed. For the consequence of this would be that nothing more would be preached. But it is different when one says: God has chosen a small number, and a large number are not chosen, they are lost; but then one also says: whom God has chosen comes to faith, is justified, renewed, preserved unto death; God has revealed this. We must not think that no one can know the dark counsel. No, the whole world can know it; in all these works is revealed what God has thought for eternity. This is how God wants to lead people to salvation. If you do not allow yourself to be led in this way, it is your fault that you are rejected. God would not have rejected you if you had not willfully and stubbornly resisted. God also sought you, but you did not let Him find you; He **<AGtG 266>** knocked at your door, but you did not open it, even though God gave you the grace to do so.

54 [1879 Western District essay by Walther]

In the same way Chemnitz, to whom one wants to refer, does not teach particular election. One can cite a large number of passages where he speaks quite clearly and brightly of particular predestination. He writes:

"Thirdly, they (the papists) oppose the doctrine of predestination or election to the confident assurance of salvation; and in order that they may do this with a certain appearance, they say that the pretense of being able to see through the dark mystery of predestination is to be avoided. And it is certainly true what is also diligently taught among us, that the secret counsel of God is not to be investigated, in order to determine from it whether one is in the number of the elect; for that is the height from which one plunges down into many errors and finally into despair itself."

These words alone show that he must have believed in this mystery. If there were no election of grace, he would have to say: what do you want to search for that which does not exist? There is, he says, such a counsel of God, but you cannot investigate it, but can only come to it by revelation. God is not so disposed towards men that he thinks: I will decide something, but no one shall know anything about it. No, God has said: I have decided something, and the whole world shall know what it is; I do not need to say: I have chosen Paul, or Peter, or John, but I describe them in detail. When someone sees that he is described here, he knows for certain that he is chosen, more certainly than if his name were written. The devil might whisper to him: perhaps someone else has the same name. [Chemnitz continues:]

> "For election is not to be judged from the thoughts of reason or doubtful speculations as to what has been decided in the secret counsel of God concerning the salvation or damnation of each one, but from the word of God, in which God has revealed his will to us; not, however, from the law, which preaches about our works, merits and worthiness, but from the gospel. The Gospel, however, does not speak of election, as the poets of the tables of the Parsons (goddesses of destiny) fabulate that some are destined to life and others to death, about which we know nothing, namely whether we are among those who are to be saved or those who are to be damned. But the doctrine of predestination sets before us the counsels of God concerning the causes and manner of salvation and damnation, as revealed in the Word: 1) God's counsel concerning the redemption of the human race through the obedience and suffering of Christ the Mediator; **<AGtG 267>** 2) the counsel

concerning the calling by the ministry of the Word of both Jews and Gentiles to the fellowship of the merit of Christ unto salvation. 3.) the counsel of God that he would work in the hearts of men by his Spirit through the hearing of the Word, so that they might repent and believe the gospel; 4.) the counsel of God that he would justify and save those who, feeling their sins and the wrath of God, flee by faith to the throne of grace and accept the one presented in the promise of the gospel, but would condemn those who reject the word, despise the promise and do not accept it. This is the sum and resolution of the doctrine of predestination as revealed in the Word."

This must be borne in mind: this is not the counsel itself, but this is how it is revealed to us in the Bible. We were not with God when he made the decision about us. Now we have a longing in our hearts: I would like to know. Then God says: Go into my Word, study the doctrine of universal redemption, universal calling, etc. There you will find what God has decided, namely to save those who will believe to the end; and he has not only established this principle, no, he has seen all those people who will believe to the end, and of them he has taken counsel: they shall be saved, and it is I who also see to it that they persevere to the end and are saved. And there I have much to do with them; to seek them out, to work on them with the Holy Spirit, to guide and lead them throughout life, and to keep them until the hour of death. There we see it made bright and clear what God has decided for eternity. Now we find ourselves in it, even though our names are not mentioned in the Bible. Chemnitz therefore does not say: this is the predestination that God has decreed in eternity, but: insofar as and to the extent that it is made manifest to us.

"which does not teach that true believers should doubt whether they are in the number of the elect, but as Paul establishes a series of steps (*gradationem*) in Romans 8: Those whom he has chosen, he has called; those whom he has called, he has justified. So those whom God calls and makes righteous should certainly consider themselves elected. And if the reader looks at the passages of Scripture concerning election, he will clearly see that the doctrine of predestination is made known in Scripture, not to make the salvation of believers doubtful and uncertain, but that it may be the foundation of assurance. Eph. 1[:4]; 2 Tim. 2[:19]; John 10[:28 f.]; Rom. 8, 11[:29]; 2 Tim. 1[:7-9]" (*Examen Conc. Trid. Ed. Genev. fol*. 172. [*Examination of the Council of Trent*, 606])

56 [1879 Western District essay by Walther]

This I confess: if the good God had not determined from eternity to save me, I would not go to heaven. Even if God gave me his Word and Spirit, I would still fall away. After all, **<AGtG 268>** Adam and Eve fell away, and they were different people from us. What would become of us? No, God has calculated everything he wanted to do to bring people to heaven.

Apology of the Formula of Concord: "Much less, however, should one go out, as our opponent does, and say that God has decreed of his own free will, even without regard to sin, that some should be damned. For what God holds or has concluded in his secret, hidden counsel cannot be said with certainty, nor should we enter into such a deep, hidden secret, but save the same in this life, meanwhile remaining with the revealed Word of God, by which we are called to repentance and faith in Christ and salvation is faithfully offered to us."

To say that election by grace is revealed in Scripture is not only to say that the doctrine is found in Scripture, but also that one can learn from Holy Scripture alone whether one is an elect person. God has spoken of election by grace in such a way that I can find out from Scripture whether I am an elect person or not. Just as I can find out from Scripture whether I am now in grace with God or not. My name is not written there either.

> "Which word or revealed will of God concerning the salvation of the weary and burdened is certain, infallible, and unquestionable, and in no wise contrary to the hidden counsel of God, on which alone our judgment depends."

Good to remember! What we recognize from God's Word is never contrary to the hidden counsel. On the contrary, it is a light that God has shed on us above the darkness of eternity, in which God has taken counsel. Heaven opens up to me, as it were. There I see God sitting and counseling the Trinity, and I hear my name: “He, too, shall go to heaven.” And yet it is not an absolute election. For if God had not seen me in Christ, he would not have elected me. The election of grace is only held out to believers for their comfort, not to the world.

"Just as, contrary to the will revealed in the word of God, nothing can be inferred from it, nor has God himself pointed this out to us in his word. Therefore, since not all accept the same calling, we should not say that God, in his secret counsel, out of his own free will and purpose, even without sin, ordains those who do not repent to condemnation, so that they cannot be converted and saved, for this is not revealed to us in the Word." **<AGtG 269>**

57 [1879 Western District essay by Walther]

So when we see that there are many on whom God's Word makes no impression, what are we to think? We should not speculate, for this is not revealed to us. We should not allow reason to enter into this mystery, for it has no place there, but should go in with faith and say: "My God, I do not understand this, but I uncover my head and worship you and believe what you say."

> "but hold that God's judgments in these cases are unsearchable and incomprehensible." (op. cit. *fol.* 209 a.)

It is to be noted how the Fathers expressed this differently, that one should not investigate the heavenly counsel of God and yet be certain of his election of grace, especially to those who want to distort this and say that the Fathers did not want one to be certain of his election at all. This is an incorrect statement. They only say that one should not take the wrong path in order to attain this knowledge. Some testimonies about this:

Luther: "After my death, many will bring my books here and cite them and will want to prove and confirm all kinds of errors and their own fantasies. But now I have written, among other things, that everything is necessary and must be done; but at the same time I have also added that one should regard the God who has revealed Himself." [*StL* 2, 184; *AE* 5:50]

Thus Luther does not contradict the first words. For this is certain: if God foreknew it, then it must happen, otherwise God would have been mistaken. As surely as God foreknows everything that He foreknows, so surely is everything that happens necessary in this sense. When a man hears this with reason, he thinks: this is a strange doctrine, and comes to believe as the Turks [i.e. fatalism]. [Luther again:]

> "Just as we sing in the 45th Psalm: 'His name is Jesus Christ, the LORD of hosts, and there is no other God' and in many other places."

A strange passage! It says that God only wants to be found in Christ Jesus. If you want to know God's attitude towards you, you cannot climb a ladder to heaven and ask God. There is only one door to the Father, that is Jesus Christ; there is no other God for you than this God. If you think: I know how Christ thinks, for He is the Savior, then you also know how the Father thinks. If a person has love for Christ and trust in Christ, he should not doubt, but believe: I am elect, Christ has chosen me, he cannot cast me away. [Luther again:]

> "But they [Calvinists] will pass over all those passages and accept only those that speak of the hidden God. For this reason, you who hear me now should remember that I have taught this:

namely, that one should not inquire into the election (*de praedestinatione*) of the hidden God, but that one should be content with the same election, which is **<AGtG 270>** revealed through the call and through the ministry; for there you can be sure of your faith and salvation, and say: I believe in the Son of God, who has said: 'He who believes in the Son has eternal life' (John 3:36); therefore there is no condemnation or wrath in him, but the good pleasure of God the Father." (On Gen. 26, 9. II, 269 f.) [StL 2, 184-185; AE 5:50]

Jakob Heerbrand: "Whence must the doctrine of predestination be begun? Not *a priori*, that is, from the secret will of God, which is unsearchable and incomprehensible, and he who searches hard things will find them too hard. (Prov. 25:27b)" (*Comp. theol. p.* 480.)

Luther: "In the disputation of election it is useful and best to begin at the bottom, in Christ, so one finds and hears the Father; for all who have begun at the top have fallen by the neck." (Table Talk. XXII, 1289; [cf. AE 54, 90 f.; 385)

Conr. Dietrich: "One should not carelessly seek the purpose directly from God (for no one has ever seen him, John 1:18, and his ways are unsearchable, Romans 11:33), but one should seek it indirectly, i.e. solely in the revealed words of the Gospel." (*Institutiones Catecheticae*, i.e. a thorough interpretation of the Catechism. Translated from the Lat. by Dr. Notz. S. 343.)

Luther:

"Of God, if he is not revealed, there is no faith and no knowledge, and one can know nothing of such a God, and one must abide by the saying: '*Quae supra nos, nihil ad nos*', what is above us is none of our business (we should not concern ourselves with it). For such thoughts, which seek to investigate something higher than or beyond the revelation of God, are diabolical thoughts, so that nothing more can be accomplished than that we plunge ourselves into destruction; for they hold us to such a reproach, which is unsearchable, namely God, who is not revealed. It is much better to let God keep his conclusions and secrets secret. We must not strive so hard to have them revealed to us. At Exodus 33:18 Moses also desired that God would let him see His face or glory, but the Lord answered him thus, v. 20: 'You will look behind me, but my face cannot be seen. For this pride is original sin itself, by which we are driven and provoked to seek a way to God through natural speculation. But it is a great sin and a useless and vain thing that one should be subject to it. For thus says Christ

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John 6:65, 14:6: 'No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.' Therefore, when we come to the God who has not revealed himself, there is no **<AGtG 271>** faith, no Word, or even no knowledge. For it is an invisible God, whom you will not make visible. Accordingly, God has also quite seriously forbidden that one should not be so tempted as to recognize his divinity. Just as Christ said to the apostles in Acts 1:7, when they asked him: 'Lord, is it not for this time that the kingdom of Israel is to be restored?" It is not for you to know the time or the hour, etc.' Let me (says God) be hidden, since I have not revealed myself to you, or you will be the cause of your own destruction, just as Adam fell horribly. For 'he who searches hard things will find them too hard', Proverbs 25:27." (On Gen. 26:9. II, 258 ff. [StL 2, 176 f.; AE 5, 44])

There are passages which have misled some, for example, that in temptation one should refrain entirely from the election of grace, forgetting it completely; but if one looks more closely, one finds that they think that the hidden counsel should be set aside, but the right doctrine of election in Christ should not be concealed even in these cases.

Thus Olearius writes:

"That pious and cross-trained preacher had to endure many a hard punishment and great anguish of soul; for a time he could not even utter these words: No one can call Jesus Lord without the Holy Spirit. He then vowed not to enter into any more disputes about the high article of the divine election of grace. — A count could not come to rest in his deathbed on the mere counsel of God until he had been dissuaded and pointed to the universal grace of God the Father, as well as to the universal satisfaction and merit of Christ on the cross. Other examples can be read elsewhere. Jeremias Nicolai confessed in particular in his booklet, called 'Seelen-Trost' [Soul-Solace], years ago how such disputations caused him heartache and fear of hell, until he finally tore himself free again with God's help. Therefore, let there be no more disputing and scrupulous arguing. He who believes is foreknown, he who does not believe is not. A simple-minded layman (writes the spiritual and consoling Herr Arnd) can refute the trouble of sin by faith and say: "I do not know much about sin, but I do know 1) that Christ our Lord has called all sinners to Himself and that the Lord Himself has said: I have come to call sinners to repentance and not the righteous. 2) Paul says that this is certainly true and a precious word, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and that he gave his life for all. I also know that God wants all men to be helped, that no one is excluded, and that God does not want anyone to be lost, **<AGtG 272>** that no one is rejected

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and that God has revealed what he wants and does not want. 3) I also know that I have been baptized into the death of Christ, so I have a universal calling, a universal Redeemer, a universal gracious will of God, a universal baptism, why should I bother with the promise, Christ gives me the treasure of my redemption in the supper, the ransom itself. I will rather run after my Lord Christ with the Canaanite lady and fall down before him and say: Lord, help me! And I will trust in what David says: "You will not despise a broken and contrite heart. Who has ever been put to shame who trusted in him? Who has ever been spurned who called on him? Whom has he ever cast away who came to him?" (Gospel comfort for the sick, from the sermon on Matthew 5:21-28. p. 356 f.)

# Thesis IV.*)

*) Protocol of the Secretary.

"Therefore, whoever wants to be saved should not burden or trouble himself with the thoughts of the secret counsel of God, whether he is also chosen and ordained to eternal life, so that the wretched Satan is in the habit of tempting and deceiving pious hearts. Rather, they should hear Christ, who is the book of life and of God's eternal election to eternal life for all God's children. He testifies to all men without distinction that God wills all men to come to him, weighed down and burdened with sin, that they may be refreshed and saved. According to this teaching of his, they should forsake their sins, repent, believe his promise and rely on him completely, and because we are not able to do this on our own, the Holy Spirit wants to work this, namely repentance and faith, in us through the Word and the sacraments. And that we may accomplish this, persevere in it and remain constant, we should call upon God for his grace, which he has promised us in Holy Baptism, and not doubt that he will impart it to us by means of his promise." (FC SD XI 70-72)

It has been noted:

So far we have only spoken of the way in which we should not seek to attain the right use of the doctrine of the election of grace: namely, not by the way of reason, law and outward appearances, nor by searching the secret, hidden abyss of divine providence. What then is the right way?

61 [1879 Western District essay by Walther]

Some even deny that a Christian can become certain of his election. But we have already seen from the 2nd Thesis that this is quite un-Lutheran; for there it is expressly stated: "This also belongs to the further explanation and salutary custom of the doctrine of the providence of God: ... how one can know, from what and by what means one can recognize **<AGtG 273>** who are the elect." (Words of the Formula of Concord!) That one can and should become certain of his election is quite clear from many passages of Holy Scripture. Peter actually says that we should make our calling and election sure. [cf. 2 Peter 1:10] But how could he have said this if it were not at all possible to be certain of our election? indeed, how could he have reproached the Christians, so to speak, for always doubting their election? Then he would have had to call out to them just the opposite; he would have had to say to them: do not seek to be certain in this conviction that you are elect, for no one can achieve this in this world. Moreover, the apostles often comfort their Christians with the fact that they are elect. How could they have done this if they could not be sure of their election? They would have given false comfort and no one would have accepted it, but they would have been answered: Yes, who among us knows that he is elect? I cannot comfort a poor man by pointing him to the great riches that are in the world, for that is his misery, that he has none of them. But I can remind a rich person who is still not satisfied that God has poured out such a great blessing on him. So it is here too. As certain as it is that the apostles comfort Christians with the fact that they are elect and will certainly be saved, it is also certain that Christians can and should come to the certainty of this divine blessing of grace. Paul even presupposes this certainty in his readers, for how else could he hold it up to them as a comfort? He says to the cross-bearers in Romans 8:28-30: "But we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also ordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. And those whom he predestined, he also called; those whom he called, he also justified; and those whom he justified, he also glorified." He wants to say: "Consider this, dear brothers, you know that you are elect, but everything must work out for the best for the elect; therefore do not be so sad about your cross, everything must work out gloriously in the end. Your cross is a sign that you are elect, for God has also elected us to bear with Christ all the suffering and weakness in this world; therefore rejoice, rejoice! Furthermore,

the Lord comforts those who are reviled and persecuted by the world for His sake by promising them a great reward of grace in heaven, Matthew 5:11-12. But how could he comfort us if we could not be sure that we would go to heaven, that we are elected? But the Savior presupposes this in his dear sheep, that they trust him for this, that he will keep them in faith until death for salvation, and that no creature may snatch them out of his hand. In addition, the apostle in Romans 8 speaks in the plural. He says: "But we know" **<AGtG 274>** etc., v. 28; "who shall separate us" etc.; "neither high nor low, nor any other creature, shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord", v. 35, 39. By this he evidently does not mean himself alone; for in the words quoted he speaks at the same time of the general counsel of God's grace, namely, that Christ died for us and rose again and ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God to plead for us. But Christ did not die and rise for Paul alone, but for all. So the apostle begins a song of triumph and says: "Who will separate us from the love of God" etc., as if death were already behind us and we were already in the midst of heaven. Next, what is faith but the assurance that through Christ I will be eternally saved? Of course, we are already saved here; but what good would that do us if we were not saved there? Someone would wish never to have been born. For the Christian, salvation in this life and in the next cannot be separated. This is already inherent in the concept of justifying faith, that it is also a saving faith; for where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation. Whoever therefore believes should also believe this: I am justified, therefore I will also be saved. Christians are saved, but in hope; therefore they are saved, having a living hope that they will enter into eternal salvation. Romans 8:24.

Finally, there is the doctrine of hope. Holy Scripture says not only that I should believe, but also that I should hope; now our hope is not for the present, but for the future; not for the earthly, but for the heavenly. The Christian does not hope for great honor, health, or money, for these things belong to the hope of shame. But the Scripture speaks of his hope: "it does not put to shame", that is the hope of eternal life. Peter says that Christians are born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ; this is denied by those who deny that we are to be certain of our election. For this saying does not mean that they hope to be immortal, as the rationalists think. Christ did not come to say this, for we already know this; even the devil knows that he is immortal, and this knowledge only tells him

that he is eternally tormented. Our hope is rather that we will attain eternal life. It is almost incomprehensible how a Christian can deny that we are to be certain of our election, and yet wants to believe that he is born again to a living hope; but one does not believe how the mind can go astray while the heart still remains in the truth. Anyone who has this living hope and denies the certainty of election does not believe what he says with his mind. As soon as he comes into fear and distress, he will say: Oh dear God, you must not forsake me, you alone are my strength, my help; if you do not preserve me, then it is all over with me, you alone are the wisdom and the light and the life. But all these sayings are nothing other than testimonies to the fact that Christians believe that they are chosen. Admittedly, this faith, like faith in the forgiveness of sins, is not always complete, not always strong; on the contrary, most of the time it flounders. Luther even says: "If this wavering ceases with you, then it is bad with you; not because it belongs to faith — for this is always a hero in itself — but because it belongs to the flesh. But the flesh must always falter, for we still have to fight with the world and the devil, and in such a **<AGtG 275>** battle the flesh is shaky. But, of course, only he who believes is in this struggle; therefore, if the faltering is gone from you, it is to be feared that you no longer have faith either. Let us not think that we are so foolish as to think that a Christian must always have such a heroic faith that the thought never enters his mind that he could be lost; oh no! A Christian wavers to and fro, always receiving blows and jolts, so that he must again and again go to his word and fall on his knees and call upon God not to extinguish the little light of faith in his heart. This is already the case with justification, how much more so with our hope! it is very imperfect. One person is further along in faith and hope than another. Indeed, just as there are the holy children of God who believe that they have no forgiveness of sins and yet have it, so there are also true Christians who do not believe that they are elect and yet are. For, as the ancients say, they only lack reflexive faith, i.e. the faith that is based on certain conclusions that we draw from the Word of God. For example, I have heard and accepted the Gospel; I can now draw the conclusion from it: therefore I believe. This is reflexive faith. But I can also fall into such temptation that I do not draw this conclusion and say: Alas, I have no faith. What old pastor is there among us who has not already had such precious souls under his hands? If we did not want to distinguish between mere and reflective faith, we would do terrible harm to the poor souls.

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We cannot then say to these people: Oh, only begin to believe! For they answer us: Yes, pastor, that is precisely my need, that I cannot believe. Rather, we must treat these sick people in a pastoral manner by asking them: Dear friend, would you not like to believe that Christ Jesus is your Savior? Then the person will answer: "Of course I would; that is my most ardent wish!" Then answer him: Well, dear friend, then you already believe; for whoever wishes that Jesus is his Savior already believes that Jesus will save him; for whoever does not believe this does not wish it either; for no one wishes to believe something to be true that he considers to be a lie. Luther acted in the same way. When an poor woman once came to him and complained that she could not believe, he had her recite the *Creed*, the Christian faith. When she had finished, he asked her if it was true. Yes, of course it is true, she replied. Then be glad, dear woman, replied Luther, you have a very strong faith, a better one than I have. [StL 5, 179; AE 5, 46]

Also consider this: we by no means teach that a Christian is absolutely certain that he will be saved. But this must be understood correctly. What does it mean that I am absolutely certain that I will be saved? It means: I know for certain that I will be saved, even if I steal and whore and murder and no longer read the Bible or pray. That would be an accursed certainty; it would be nothing other than the most shameful carnal certainty. No, if I am certain of my salvation by faith, I am certain of it with fear and trembling, as we shall see more clearly later. If there is a chair in a room and I see it, I am absolutely certain of it; for God has given me the eye for this purpose, not to deceive me, but that I may see how things are. But it is not so with salvation; for I have no eye with which to look into the book of life; but I am certain of my salvation *a posteriori*, namely, because I believe. Just as Moses could not see the face of God, but could only look back him, so also **<AGtG 276>** we cannot see God from the front, but only from behind. If I say: I certainly believe that I will be saved, then I must also add: but of course, if I am no longer a Christian, then everything is over. But this is not to say that I am not truly certain of my salvation, for being absolutely certain and being uncertain are not opposites. I can be completely, indeed infallibly certain, and yet not absolute. For I must always think: but of course, if I were to become such a wicked wretch, who would cast away the Lord Jesus and roll about again in the dunghill of the world like a pig, the good God has given me no *security* (guarantee); then he says: he will go away; yes, then

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I would be worse than before. But while I know this and always take it into consideration, I firmly believe that my dear Lord Jesus Christ will not leave me; for my comfort is not that I have seized Christ, but that he has seized me; not that I am faithful, but that He is faithful; not that I remain with Christ, but that He remains with me; and therefore I am of the rock-solid conviction: I will be saved, the Lord will help me through.

Now it is said: Against this doctrine of the certainty of election, the fact that there are temporal believers is a veritable iron wall. It is said: The Scriptures evidently teach that there are true believers who believe only for a time; and this is flatly opposed to the doctrine of the certainty of election, just as the doctrine of the Lutherans, that even the ungodly receive the true body and blood of Christ in Holy Communion, is opposed to the doctrine of the Zwinglians, that Christ's body and blood are not present in the Lord's Supper. If all believers are to be certain of their election, they say, then so too should the temporal believers. But these are obviously not chosen, for they are not saved; therefore they should believe a lie. There is no getting away from that.

We answer: However, the Lutherans said to the Zwinglians that 1 Cor. 11:27-29 clearly shows that the words of institution in Holy Communion "this is my body, this is my blood" must not be distorted; for this passage clearly teaches that even the ungodly receive Christ's body and blood. So Christ's body and blood are not merely spiritually present in the Lord's Supper, but bodily; for the ungodly do not receive it spiritually, but only the faithful. But they do not want to base their doctrine of the Lord's Supper on this passage, but on the words of institution. They only want to use this passage to protect the main and basic passage from being distorted. But where do our opponents have a passage in Holy Scripture on which they base their doctrine, where it is expressly stated that one cannot be certain of election? We, on the other hand, have a whole host of clear scriptural passages for our doctrine. That objection is therefore nothing more than a mere reasoning that should not overturn this precious promise. We cannot, however, resolve the apparent contradiction in relation to those who believe temporarily, for we are miserable creatures. But this should not move us to overturn God's clear word and rob ourselves and Christianity of such an extremely comforting doctrine. The Lord Himself says to the seventy disciples, who rejoiced that even the evil spirits were subject to them, that **<AGtG 277>** they should rather rejoice that their names are written in heaven. But should there not have been some among them who did not remain in the faith? there was even a lost child among the twelve. Nevertheless, the Lord says of all of them that they are the elect, and does not forbid anyone to believe it.

In the same way Paul, through whom the Spirit of God speaks, calls the whole Christian congregation in Ephesus elect and demanded of them all that they should believe that they were elect, although he knew for certain that not all of them were true Christians, let alone that he should have been certain that all were elect. But nevertheless he speaks in this way because he owes it to love to speak in this way (just as we should also believe according to love that all our church members are elect), and is not at all concerned about the temporary believers. Yes, this is the right way to treat the temporary believers: do not concern yourself with them except to the extent that you take them as a warning example, lest you also become a temporary believer. —

Let us now hear several testimonies to the fact that we should be sure of our election by seeking it first in Christ and his Word.

Luther writes: "Initially, God wanted to forestall this pretense. For thus he held out his will and counsel to us, saying thus: Behold, man, I will gloriously reveal my election to you; but not by the way of your reason and carnal wisdom, just as you let yourself dream and think. This is what I will also do: from a God who is not revealed, I will become a revealed God, and yet I will remain the same God. I will become man, or I will send my Son, who will die for your sin and rise again from the dead; and thus I will fulfill your desire, so that you may know whether you are saved or not. 'Behold, this is my Son, whom you shall hear Matthew 17:5; behold him as he lies in the manger and in his mother's womb, and also as he hangs on the cross; behold what he does, what he says, there you will surely take hold of me; for "whoever sees me," says Christ John 14:9, "sees the Father. Wherever you hear him and are baptized in his name and love his word, then you will certainly be saved and be completely assured of your salvation." [StL 2, 177-8, AE 5:44-45]

Remember these golden words! "From a God who is not revealed, I will become a revealed God, and yet I will remain the same God." When I imagine God as He is presented in Scripture, then I am reading in His eternal book. That is why Christ is also called the Book of Life. The book of life is actually God's foreknowledge of my salvation; but I can read this nowhere else but in Christ; there it is made manifest what God once secretly decided. It often seems that Luther also says that we cannot be certain of our election; but this is only an appearance. He only means what we call absolute certainty. Many want to interpret Luther as if he meant by election only the general

counsel of grace of God in Christ Jesus; but this is a great error. Luther only says that one should not be certain of his election *a priori*, but *a posteriori*, in Christ. We know how Luther speaks of the certainty that is based on Christ and his Word. This is rock-solid for him; just as rock-solid for him **<AGtG 278>** is the certainty of salvation based on Christ, that is, election. The following passages clearly testify to this.

Luther writes: "It is indeed possible for the elect to be deceived, as indeed I was deceived up to my ears in the papacy. How then is it possible? They can be deceived, but finally they come out again, before they depart from this vale of tears; as I often use the example of St. Bernard: He also thought that the pope was God; but when he was about to die, he turned his eyes away from the pope, from his capes and monasticism, and turned to Christ, his Savior, and forgot all about the pope and his strict order, and said: 'I have lived a pious life; but I know that my Lord Christ has two rights to the kingdom of heaven, firstly by nature as the only begotten Son of the Father, where he has heaven from eternity; secondly, he has heaven as the Son of Mary, and there he has acquired heaven with his bitter suffering and death and given it to me. He does not boast of his papal vow, but says: "Christ has obtained heaven by inheritance and for sale through his blood. So we also preach. He was in error and yet came out of it." (On Matt. 24:24. of the year 1539. Erl. vol. XI.V, 148 f.)

Furthermore, Luther writes: "Although some of the elect have fallen and been in error all their lives, they must nevertheless return to the right way before their death; as Christ says in John 10:28: 'No one will snatch them out of my hand'." ("That Free Will is Nothing" from 1525. Walch XVIII, 2149 [StL 18, 1736; AE 33, 85])

Luther continues in the first quotation: "But if you blaspheme or despise the Word, you are condemned, for 'he who does not believe will be condemned', Mark 16:16. The other thoughts and ways that your reason or flesh dictates to you, you shall kill. For God is an enemy to them. Let this alone be your concern, that you accept my Son, that Christ may please you in your heart in his birth, miracles and cross. For there is the book of life in which you are written. ... God did not come down from heaven to make you uncertain of providence and to teach you to despise the sacraments, absolution and other divine ordinances; indeed, he instituted all this to make you completely certain and to remove from your heart the great lack and error of doubt, so that you would not only believe in your

heart, but also see with your physical eyes and grasp it with your hands."

If it is taught that no man can be sure of his election, then the doctrine of election by grace is a desolate doctrine. For God has given it to us in the Scriptures; and so we must always be in fear and anxiety: yes, will I also belong to the elect? I do not know, I may just as well not belong. Why then do I need this teaching at all if the good Lord has forbidden me to apply it to myself? No, as surely as all the teaching of Scripture is given to us for our comfort, **<AGtG 279>** so I should also be certain that I too am chosen, for that is the comfort. This certainty is not a carnal assurance, nor a worldly hope, but a Christian hope. Of course, the world must speak: Hoping and waiting makes fools of some; but the Christian says: Hope does not put to shame. Therefore we also cannot be put to shame with our certain hope of eternal life, or the Bible would not be true. Therefore let us hope confidently and cheerfully. This is no impudence, no sacrilege, it is only the right submission to God and his holy word.

Luther continues: "Why then do you reject all this and complain that you cannot know whether you are saved? You have the Gospel, you have been baptized, you have been absolved, you are a Christian, and yet you still doubt and say that you do not know whether you believe or disbelieve, whether you believe what is said and preached to you in the Word and Sacraments of Christ to be true! . . . God says to you: Behold, here you have my Son, hear him and receive him; if you do this, you are already certain of your faith and your salvation. Yes, you say, but I do not know whether I can remain in the faith! Well, then, accept the present promise and provision, and be careful not to be foolish or too exact in your search for the secret counsel of God. If you believe in the revealed God, the hidden God will also be revealed to you **in time**. For 'he who sees me', says Christ John 4:9, 'sees the Father also'. But he who rejects the Son loses with the revealed God also the hidden God, who has not revealed himself. But if you cling to the revealed God with strong faith, so that you are minded in your heart not to lose Christ, even if you should be deprived of everything else you have, then you are surely provided for and will understand the hidden God; indeed, you already fully understand him." (On Gen. 26:9. II, 260 ff.)

Just as a householder can say to his son while he is still alive: “when I die, you will have this and that”: so also God in

Christ has not only made His will for us, but has also unsealed it. This is the great grace of God; and we miserable people would not believe this? we would say: this might please the dear God, if I hoped to be saved, therefore I would rather believe that I am going to hell, then I am a better Christian? That would really be putting the horses behind the cart. No, the very fact that I know I have a gracious God who will not forsake me: therefore, when I close my eyes in death, I will also be saved, that is what makes me cheerful and happy and capable of all good works. Luther admits that a young Christian can easily lose his faith by speculating about election; for if I doubt whether I will be saved, this must have a great influence on whether I am ever certain that I now stand in grace with God. Luther says: "First make sure that you firmly believe your justification; and when you have had all kinds of experience, then it will become clear to you that you are not only justified now, but that you will also be saved for ever and ever. For we are not taught that belief in election is absolutely necessary to be a Christian; I can be a true Christian without ever having heard anything about my election, let alone having a firm belief **<AGtG 280>** in it; but that is just weakness, just as out of weakness one cannot have heard or grasped much of what is presented to us in the Gospel. What do most of our dear Christians know about the actual relationship between the divine and human natures in Christ, and yet they are sure of their faith? Nevertheless, the doctrine of the person of Christ is of immeasurable importance for the faith life of the Church. It is the same with the doctrine of election. How faith-strengthening it is for me to know that before the foundation of the world I already stood before God's eyes and that God has counseled how he wants to save me poor worm!

It cannot be denied, however, that there are Lutheran theologians who speak of election in various senses. They speak of the election of all believers, including those who believe in time. But they also add that if we speak of election in the proper sense, then contemporary believers do not belong to it. But now they may prove that in the Scriptures the elect are ever understood to include the time-believers. It is true that Paul calls all the Ephesians the elect, but it would be quite wrong to conclude from this that he also declares the contemporary believers to be the elect, just as he does not consider all the Corinthians to be sanctified in Christ Jesus, even though he calls them all that. After all, he rebukes them for having rioters among them. But there he does not take back what he had said at first; but from this we can rather see how he wants that expression to be understood,

namely synecdochically, as he even calls the Galatians a church, although he has to call out to them: you have lost Christ, who would be justified by the law, and have fallen from grace. Now each of us knows from the doctrine of the church that when Paul uses the term "church", "congregation", it by no means follows that non-believers are members of the church. Just as a farmer says of a field of wheat: this is wheat, although he assumes that not all the wheat in the field is wheat, but that there are also tares and the like mixed in with it: so also the word "church" actually refers only to the believers; but this word is also extended in the improper sense to those who hold themselves outwardly to the believers in the visible church. This is the way of speaking in synecdoche, where a thing is given the name of its main constituents. The apostle also uses this way of speaking here. Because the true Christians among the Ephesians really belonged to the elect in the true sense of the word, he calls them all elect.

Luther also writes: "Why do you want to hear the gospel, say the Epicureans, since it is all due to providence? — So Satan takes away by force the providence of which we are assured through the Son of God and through the holy sacraments, and makes us uncertain, since we are quite certain beforehand. And when he assaults the poor frightened consciences with this temptation, we perish; just as it would almost have happened to me if **<AGtG 281>** Staupitz had not saved me, since I had the same temptation... Dr. Staupitz used to comfort me with these words and said to me: "Dear one, why do you bother yourself with these speculations and lofty thoughts? Look at the wounds of Christ and his blood, which he shed for you; from this the providence of God will shine forth for you. For this reason you should hear the Son of God, who was sent in the flesh, who became man and appeared for this reason, that he might destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8) and make you certain of reconciliation. And for this reason he says to you, "You are my sheep, because you hear my voice, and no one will snatch you out of my hand. John 10:29 There are many who have not resisted this temptation in this way, but have been cast into destruction and eternal damnation. For this reason, the hearts of godly people must be diligently strengthened so that they may always be prepared against it. Just as a hermit or recluse in '*vitis patrum*' admonished his listeners that they should refrain and abstain from such speculations and lofty thoughts, saying: "If you see that anyone has set foot in heaven, drive him back again. For thus the saints or Christians, who are still novices, are wont to think of God outside

of Christ; and it is these who presume to ascend into heaven, and there set both their feet; but they are soon cast into hell and sunk. Therefore let the godly take heed and make every effort to learn to cleave to the Child and Son of God, Jesus, who is your God and became man for your sake: you must recognize him and hear him, and delight in him and thank him for it. If you have him, you also have the hidden God together with the revealed God. And this is the only way, the truth and the life; outside the same way, truth and life, you will find nothing but corruption, damnation and death." (Interpretation of Gen. 26:9. II, 263-266 [cf. AE 5:47f.])

These are also words to be heeded: "If he takes away the gospel, he takes away our transference"; for only there is the election of grace revealed to us, where we are made certain through the gospel that we will be saved. Luther often speaks in such a way that it seems to him that the general will of God and the election of grace coincide; but this only seems to be the case. He does say of one who now stands in grace that he should believe that he will certainly die saved, but for him standing in grace and being saved coincide completely. The thought of one who stands in grace: yes, who knows whether you will also die blessed? was for him the greatest enemy of faith, which had to extinguish faith altogether. And so it is. That is the right state of a Christian, that his faith in his state of grace and in his blessed death completely collapses, or he is an ungrateful person. For God has done everything to bring us to heaven; but now we should also say: I belong to those who will be saved, God be eternally praised and glorified. **<AGtG 282>**

Brenz writes: "Do not sink into the deep abyss of predestination; seek your predestination neither in the secret counsel of God (for it is not a matter for the human mind to investigate), nor in yourself, in which you will find nothing but eternal damnation, but in Christ Jesus." (Cited by the Swedish Archbishop Lenaeus in his Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles, p. 95 f.)

Chemnitz writes: "It is false what the Council of Trent says in the 12th chapter, that one cannot know from the word of God which ones God has chosen, unless there is a special revelation besides and apart from the word. This is also not true, that no true believer can be certain from God's Word without a special revelation that he is among the predestinated. For this is at variance with Scripture, as we have shown." (*Exam. Concil. Trid. Editio Genev. fol.* 172.)

When we cite passages of Scripture in which election by grace is taught, it is often objected to us that, yes, it was directly revealed to the writers of these passages that they were elect; but we have seen before that this is an error; this objection, as our quotation shows, is made by the whole Synod of Trent.

Chemnitz further writes: "I will only add this, by what various artifices the preachers seek to distort the passage Rom. 8:31 ff. Pighius says from Thomas that Paul speaks there only of the certainty of his salvation, which he had from a special revelation; but that he does not affirm that every believer in Christ has such a certainty. But this is evidently false, for Paul speaks in the plural in that whole passage (*sententia*) and takes as the basis of that certainty: Christ has died, yes, is seated at the right hand of the Father and represents us. Andradius, seeing that this distortion cannot stand, therefore says that the word *πέπεισμαι* (Rom. 8:38. — "I am certain") does not mean a certain confidence, but a probable opinion or conviction, which, however, could be mistaken, because it is used in this way in some scriptural passages. But now it is also taken and used for a firm and undoubted conviction in 2 Tim. 1: "I am sure (πέπεισμαι) that he is able to keep my faith until that day.'" (op. cit. fol. 169 a.)

This was enough for dear Paul, that God was able to preserve his salvation until that day, for he was already certain that this was what he wanted. So shall we say. If we were to admit that no Christian can be certain of his election, then we must forfeit our glory, which no one has yet been able to take away from us, namely, that we make our hearers firm and certain of their salvation. Even German theologians have found in this the explanation of the incomprehensibly rapid spread of our dear Synod. For, as we have already said and must say again and again, to be certain of one's election and to be certain of one's salvation **<AGtG 283>** are one and the same thing. But to be certain of one's salvation and to believe are also one and the same, for that is what it means to believe: to be certain that God has been gracious to me in Christ in order to bring me to heaven and make me eternally blessed. Whoever, therefore, does not want to be sure that he will be saved, allows doubt to enter into his faith and thus destroys it; for the essence of faith, as it is written, is a certain assurance of what one hopes for and no doubt about what one does not see. Let us therefore watch with prayer, for the salvation of each one of us is at stake here. Satan wants to penetrate us in order to take away our best: namely, the certainty of our Christian faith and our Christian hope. The apostles also repeatedly call on us in their letters

to praise and glorify God for our election. Now we cannot praise God for an uncertain thing, but only for a certain thing; so we should be certain of our election. Let us realize what would have to be assumed if it were true that a Christian could not be certain of his salvation, that is, of his election. There would have to be one of the following things: either God would not have given His Son for the salvation of all men, for in Christ we have our salvation; or He would have done so, but would have hidden it from men; or He would have revealed it to them, but would not have done so in the opinion that they should be certain of it, that is, believe, but doubt; then faith would be doubt, then it would not be called: He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that doubteth and is baptized. The doctrine of the uncertainty of election leads to such nonsense. It also contradicts the Lord's command that we should wait for him every hour. Our opponents say: only at the hour of death can you be sure of this blessedness. If we are to wait for the Lord every hour, then we should be ready for death every hour; but if I cannot be sure of my salvation now, but only later, then those who teach in this way postpone the coming of the Lord for a long time. They also accuse us of having our faith suspended in the air, for we have no clear Word of God for our election under our feet. But they do not consider that we do not teach an absolute certainty, but one that is based on Christ and his Word. So we have very good reason, none less than Christ himself and his holy Word. However, the names of the elect are not written in the Bible; nor does it say that all men are elect; but it does say that all men are redeemed, and that all who believe in Christ shall be saved. So if I stand in faith, I am certain, and I should be certain, that I shall be saved. It is a vain objection that we had no Word of God for ourselves. The Bible is full of our doctrine. Indeed, the whole Bible is about nothing other than telling me that whoever believes and is baptized will be saved. That is the simplest of childish beliefs, that if I believe in Christ I will be saved. But of course this is something that lies in the future. That I stand in grace I know with absolute certainty, for I stand in it; but that I will certainly be saved depends on whether I remain in the faith and **<AGtG 284>** do not fall back into the service of sin and unbelief; but I firmly and certainly believe that God will keep me in the faith and in sanctification. That is the whole difference. It is true that election is different from justification; I say: you are all redeemed, justification is acquired by all men, you are now all to appropriate it.

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I cannot speak of election in such a way that I say: all men are elected, therefore you should now also appropriate the general election. For not all are elected, but only a number. But because we are chosen in Christ, and believers have received Christ, all believers should firmly believe that they also belong to the number of the elect. Now there are temporal believers who are not chosen; but you should not believe that you are among them, but you should be moved by earnestly struggling, watching, praying, diligently using the means of grace.

Kromayer writes: "Since Huber, while assuming a general election, could not deny that the greatest part of men are lost, he was forced, whether he liked it or not, to maintain that election is a variable one. Some Socinians and Remonstrants are almost on the same footing when they distinguish between a complete and an incomplete election and say that the incomplete is that of the fickle, i.e. those who believe only for a time; the complete is that of those who really attain salvation. But to this opinion we oppose: 1) The constant use of the word election, which is only used in Scripture of those who truly attain salvation. 2) The saying of the Savior in Matthew 24:24: 'There shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, even the elect shall be deceived into error. 3) The passage Romans 8:29, 30: "Those whom he foreknew, he also ordained; those whom he ordained, he also made glorious. 4) Rom 11:7: "Israel that seeketh, that obtaineth not; but they that are chosen" (i.e., the elect, by putting the thing for the person) "have obtained it." 5) 1 Peter 1:1-2. That they which are chosen according to the providence of God the Father are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, and bring forth the end of faith unto salvation of souls. — To these can be added those scriptural passages in which the elect are described, e.g. 1) John 6:39: 'This is the will of the Father who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but that I should raise it up at the Last Day. 2) John 10:27-28: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. 3) The passage 2 Tim 2:19: 'The solid foundation of God endures and has this seal: The Lord knows those who are His'. — Huber replied: 1) That one could be blotted out of the book of life, as Moses Exod. 32:32-33. says: 'Now forgive them their sin. If not, blot me also out of thy book which thou **<AGtG 285>** hast written. The Lord said to

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Moses: What? I will blot him out of my book who sins against me. But in our opinion (they say) those who are written in the Book of Life and those who are chosen are one and the same. To this argument we reply that a distinction must be made between eradication that robs the thing and eradication that negates the thing. In this passage it is not understood to be an annihilation that robs the thing, as if those who were previously enrolled could be annihilated, i.e. that the elect would become reprobates; but an annihilation that negates the thing, that such people were never in the book of life. This blotting out is added to Ps. 69:29, when the royal psalmist says: "Blot them out of the book of the living, that they be not written with the righteous. 3) That the apostles elect whole churches, out of which many have perished. But we answer that they either understand election to grace, not to glory, or give the name to the whole from the more excellent part, as we call a heap of wheat wheat with many tares mixed in, or do it according to hope, because love hopes all things. 7) That Paul, of whom no one doubts that he was of the number of the elect, says in 1 Cor. 9 that he could be reprobate. But we answer by distinguishing between a reprobate in the matter of salvation and a reprobate in ecclesiastical office. Paul is not speaking of the former in the place mentioned, but of the latter." (*Theol. posit.-pol. I, 357 sqq.*)

The apostle gives us a golden chain, since one link of it is connected to the previous one, indeed, it emerges from it. From my election flows my calling, from my calling flows my justification, from my justification flows my glorification. So my calling is the result of my election, and my glorification is the result of my justification. Therefore I am to believe that I am justified because I am called; so also I am to believe that I am made glorified because I am justified. So the Holy Spirit himself calls me to believe all other works of grace from the first work of grace to all eternity, and if I do not do this, I am not obedient to the gospel. So I should not say: Yes, what a long way still lies before me until my death! what can still happen there that will lead me away from faith again, the devil, the world, my flesh, how powerful they are! No, that's just my blind reason talking. It looks as if they are bright minds and humble spirits who speak thus; but it only seems so; for faith says: I know all this well, that I could still be lost in a thousand ways, but he who began the good work in me will also accomplish it until the

day of Jesus Christ. This is what faith says. Paul says of the Philippians that equity [*Billigkeit*] requires him to think of them all as elect; how much more does our own interest in salvation require us to think of ourselves as elect! Faith and hope are in a certain sense one and the same thing. For hope is faith in relation to things to come. In the Christian questions it says: Do you also hope to be saved? which **<AGtG 286>** obviously means nothing other than believing with regard to future salvation. Whoever denies the certainty of election must delete the article on hope from the Bible; according to them I may only believe, but not hope; the world lives by hope in earthly things, and the Christian, however great his cross, should not be allowed to hope, although he is promised eternal life? Those people want to rap us on the knuckles because, in their opinion, we have such a doctrine of the election of grace; but they have none at all; with the uncertainty of election they abolish the doctrine itself. But the best of all is that they themselves do not believe what they teach.

Finally, Seckendorf's history of the Reformation by Lindner states: "In this very year (1517) and thus before the beginning of the dispute over indulgences, Luther had to preach before Duke George in the castle chapel at Dresden on Staupitz's recommendation. He dealt with the doctrine of the election of grace and showed: "How such a doctrine, if one made the beginning in the same contemplation of Christ, had great power to overcome the terror which moved men, in the feeling of their unworthiness, to flee from God, to whom alone they should take their only refuge in distress and death." Duke George was probably not satisfied with the sermon, because he wrongly imagined that such teaching made crude people, but nevertheless had to hear the frank confession of the Duchess Court Mistress Barbara von Sala over the table: "She would gladly die if she were to hear such a sermon again." Just so she died a month later. (I, 47 f.)

Keil writes that the sermon was preached on July 25, on the day of Jacob the Greater, on Matthew 20:20-23, probably based on v. 23: "It is not mine to give to sit on my right hand and on my left, but it is my Father's for whom it is prepared." George said: "He would owe a lot of money if he did not hear the same (sermon), because it only makes people safe and nefarious." This sermon is not available in print. (Luther's life circumstances. I, 33 f.)

*) [*) Minutes of Pastor Hein].

We have heard that the right way to become certain of one's election is to regard Christ as the Book of Life, and

by finding oneself in Christ, also firmly believe that one is inscribed in the Book of Life. Our old theologians therefore also declare that this is the right way to become certain of one's election, that one holds to it: I am strongly called, I stand in the true faith, therefore I will not doubt that I belong to the elect who will certainly be saved. Here are some testimonies:

Chemnitz writes in a sermon on the Gospel on the 20th Sunday after Trin. Matt. 22, 1 -14: "Thirdly, this doctrine of the providence of God must also show what a glorious, beautiful, constant consolation poor afflicted, God-fearing **<AGtG 287>** consciences have to take from this doctrine, and how they may seek and find it in this article. Although this parable is primarily directed to the punishment, warning and admonition of the Pharisees, it is nevertheless presented in such a way that the foundations of consolation are also contained in it quite sweetly and beautifully, just as these are dealt with more extensively and more clearly in other places in Scripture. For the sake of brevity, so that the sermon does not run too far, we will indicate the most important main points. And this is the reason why we want to begin, as the parable says, that the Lord has those whom he wants to be guests at this wedding appointed by his servants and ministers; that is, when I think and worry about whether I am also destined for salvation, or whether I belong to the number of the elect and whether my name is written in the book of life, because no one else will be saved except the elect, so that I may not hover between heaven and earth with uncertain, doubtful thoughts, or, as Paul says in Rom. 10, to go up to heaven or down to the depths; for with such thoughts we are all told in Romans 11: 'Who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?' but that I should and can seek such things in the calling or Word of God, which rings in my ears and heart through the mouth of a man. As Paul says in Romans 10: 'The word is near you in your mouth and in your heart', and Ephes. 1: 'He has made known to us the mystery of his will so that it may be preached'; Rom. 8: 'Those whom he has predestined or chosen, he has also called'. And this is a beautiful and glorious consolation, that from the call of the preached word I can know and experience what God has decided about me and my salvation before the foundation of the world was laid. Hence Paul says in 1 Cor. 2: "We have and know the mind of Christ, because God has revealed it to us by his Spirit, that we may know how richly we have been blessed by God. For when God calls us through the Word, we should not think: 'He calls me through the word, but who knows whether he means it in his heart', because this parable

proves that he wants me to be blessed when he calls me through the word: 'And the king was angry' because the called guests would not come. And that by the common calling he also means my person in particular, I know from this and from the fact that in absolution and in the sacrament the common promise is applied to me for my person in particular, indeed, sealed and assured. We are not to judge and make any other judgment of God's will towards us than from and according to His Word, and it would be a great blasphemy to think that God revealed one thing to us through His Word and remembered another in our hearts; for even in men this is justly punished if one speaks differently than one means, par. 12. Now it is true that no one can be saved except by accepting the Word, and it is also true that no one can accept the grace of God offered by himself, by his own efforts; for whoever teaches that the natural free will of the unregenerate man has the power and ability to accept God's grace, teaches against the whole of Holy Scripture, 1 Cor. 2:2, 2 Cor. 3, Rom. 8, etc. But according to Scripture we cannot and should not judge otherwise than when God presents His Word to us, that His will is that He wants to be powerful in us through it, and realize that we can accept the grace offered through His **<AGtG 288>** gift, power and effect. But the natural wickedness of the flesh may well resist such working of God, and those who will do this God knows and knows well beforehand; but I am not commanded to investigate this, *) [*) that I am chosen. I am to be sure of this without worrying about the believers of this age], but I judge and make my judgment according to God's word: that when he calls me by the word, he may thereby work in me power to receive it, and I pray my dear God that he may kill my fleshly business by his Spirit, Rom. 8:1, that I may not be found among those who resist his grace. For it is said, as it is written in Hos. 13: "Israel, you bring disaster on yourself, but your salvation is with me alone. So I have two beautiful consolations from this teaching: first, that I can be assured and reassured from the profession that I am also provided and chosen for salvation; second, that I have a certain consolation from the profession that the Holy Spirit wants to work in me through the work the powers and abilities so that I can accept it. And when I have the reason, then I can go back to it **) [**) [**) Into eternity] and conclude quite comfortingly that our Lord God cared so much about my salvation that he counseled about it before the foundation of the world was laid, and because I was ordained to salvation there, it has been preserved for me well and strongly enough against the weakness of my flesh, against the

world's anger, and against all the wiles and violence of the gates of hell. From this also I know that God will not change his mind and will towards me; for Paul says in Romans 11: "God's gifts and calling cannot be changed/ The article also gives me the comfort that my salvation does not depend on my works and worthiness, for grace was given to me in Christ Jesus before the world began, when I was not yet, as Paul says in 2 Timothy 1. For this reason Paul also takes this comfort from Romans 8: whatever good or evil a called Christian encounters in this world, all these things must work together for his good, because God in his purpose before the world began decreed how he would bring everyone through crosses and calamities to eternal glory. For this reason Paul also takes the courageous, cheerful consolation of Romans 8: "What shall we say? If God is for us, who can be against us? Who will separate us from the love of God? For I am sure that neither death nor life, neither the present nor the future, will separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ our Lord." (A Sermon on the Gospel of Matthew 22, preached at Wolfenbüttel by Martin Chemnitz, Doct. Anno 1573. D-E. 2.) **<AGtG 289>**

It is clear from this that Chemnitz does not mean by election the counsel of God that he would redeem all men, call them, give faith to all, save all, and he would now have left it to the future who would be eternally saved as a result of this counsel.

P. Leyser also speaks clearly about this: "If someone has these three: calling, faith in Christ, zeal in good works, which testify to faith, then he must not doubt his predestination and election in the least (*ne minimum quidem dubitet*); only he must be careful not to exalt himself because of the good works he has done, but take pains to work out his salvation with fear and trembling, praying God continually that He who began the good work in him may accomplish it, Phil. 2:12, 1:6. Nor should such a one doubt the reward. In this way the doctrine of predestination is not to be begun *a priori*, but to be learned *a posteriori*; then it provides man with the solid chain that can pull him up to heaven. This chain has been looped together for us by Paul in Romans 8:30: "Whom God has ordained, these he has also called; and whom he has called, these he has also justified; and whom he has justified, these he has also made glorious" (*Harm. ev.* on Matt. 21:16. *Tom. II. fol. 237. sq.*).

When the modern theologians come to this passage Romans 8:30, they do not admit that all who are called are also justified, and still less that they are also made glorious. But the apostle asks nothing here

about the temporary believers. He wants us to believe that if a person has been strongly called and has come to faith, he must now also firmly believe that God wants to lead him further up the other steps and also make him glorious. It would be terrible if we were to be deprived of the certainty of our salvation for the sake of those who fall away. God does not want that. How it is with these people, whether they can believe that they are really chosen, we must leave open.. We do not know what perishes in those of whom God knows that they will not remain.

Concerning faith, Luther writes: "Of all God's commandments, the highest is that we should set before us his beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who is to be the daily and most precious mirror of our hearts, in whom we see how much God loves us and how he has cared for us as a pious God, that he has also given his beloved Son for us. Here, here, I say, one learns the right art of providence [*Versehung*] and nowhere else. There it will be found that you believe in Christ. If you believe, you are called; if you are called, you are also saved. Do not let this mirror and throne of grace be torn from the eyes of your heart, but when such thoughts come and bite like fiery serpents, do not watch the thoughts nor the serpents, but always turn away your eyes and look at the bronze serpent, that is, Christ given for us, so it will be best, if God wills." (A consolation to a troubled person, etc. 1532. X, 2047 f.) **<AGtG 290>**

So it also says in our Thesis: "And that we may accomplish this, persevere in it and remain constant, we should call upon God for His grace, which He has promised us in Holy Baptism, and not doubt that He will impart it to us by means of His promise."

Here our Church confesses in clear words: it is not an offense, if I have come to faith, that I say to God: but keep me also in the faith, otherwise it will not help me. It is not sacrilege if I believe that God will answer my prayer. But then I also believe that I am the chosen one. I should not be disturbed by the fact that there are enough unfortunate people who believe for a time but fall away at the time of temptation.

Lassenius further writes: "If faith is considered according to the state in which it is in time, then it can be called more a fruit of election, although one must be careful in using such expressions, even though it is not contrary to the analogy of faith to say that it is from election to salvation that the elect believe. Since election has thus taken place, and you have had faith in Christ in childlike trust in his suffering and merit up to this point,

and still have it, and wish to remain in it constantly to the end with the help of the Holy Spirit, and also make the most eager use of all means to strengthen your faith and call upon the Holy Spirit for help in this, then you have absolutely no reason to doubt your election. God certainly knows His chosen ones and you among them. He is your shepherd and you are his sheep; remain in dutiful obedience and love for him, and you will bring the end of faith, eternal salvation, infallibly by his grace. Nor is the number of the elect so small, for John testifies that he could not count them all (Rev. 7:9) because they were too numerous; it is only said that they are few because of the damned, who are far more numerous. Who then will condemn you? God is here who justifies (Rom. 8:33), and you and those like you who believe in Jesus Christ are and will remain the chosen generation (1 Pet. 2:9). May Jesus Christ help you to feel this warmly through His love and support for your blessed consolation in time and to enjoy it blessedly in eternity." (*82 Short Consolations* etc. St. Louis, Mo. 1861. p. 158 f.)

Care should be taken to use the expression: faith is a fruit of election, lest it be thought that God does not want to give faith to others, but only intended to give it to the elect. This would invalidate the whole doctrine of the universality of grace. Therefore one should speak cautiously.

One must not think that when the old theologians also add in the words: you also should pray diligently, watch, use the means of grace faithfully, they mean to say: therefore election is uncertain, dependent on a condition that may not be fulfilled. So that God would have said: I will choose you, but on the condition that you accept my Word and remain steadfast in it to the end. If that were to be regarded as a condition, who would then be certain of his salvation! No, we only see it **<AGtG 291>** as an ordnance in which God leads to salvation. And if someone asks me: am I chosen? I cannot simply say: that goes without saying; but I must ask: do you believe in Christ, do you love him, do you need the means of grace, do you pray diligently? And if he can answer in the affirmative, then I say: Do not worry; that is a clear proof that God has chosen you and therefore given you his grace. It would be dangerous if you were to doubt your election; that would be the next path to apostasy. Indeed, it is precisely a means of remaining in the faith that you believe: I am chosen.

From the passages quoted we see how a pastor should speak to his church members. He should not say: Oh, there is no need of you;

you cannot fall; but when he says: Do not doubt your election, he must also add: Pray diligently, watch over your flesh and blood, consider what temptations you are exposed to in the world; remember that the devil is creeping after you. You must not think: why is this necessary? No, God has chosen a man and included all this in his counsel, he will have a faithful pastor who will preach the pure Word to him, take special care of his soul and tell him what will save him from apostasy. One must not think that this coincides with the false teaching: it basically depends on the behavior of the person. It only depends on his behavior if he is condemned. That he is saved depends on God's behavior. It is exactly the same here as with conversion. The fact that a person is not converted is purely his own fault, the result of his behavior against the means of grace. But the fact that a person comes to faith is only the fault of God, for God alone has done everything for this. This actually settles the doctrine of election of grace, for if God alone converts me, he alone saves me.

Gerhard: "A believer can be certain of his election... We prove our opinion 1) from the apostolic saying in 2 Peter 1:10: 'Dear brethren, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure. But those who can and should make their election firm can be sure of their election. Now the true believers can and should make their election sure." (*Conf. cath. L. II. P. 3. art. 22. c 2. fol. 1425.*)

But how can a man make his election sure in any other way than by adding his faith and believing that the Lord has brought me this far and will lead me on to a blessed end?

Luther: "If you are attached to the Lord Christ, you are certainly among the multitude whom God has chosen from the beginning to be his own; otherwise they would not come here, nor hear and accept such a revelation. Behold, then, the great temptation and all disputing about the secret transgression have been struck down so that some may be tormented and afraid, so hard that they may become insane; and yet they accomplish nothing, except that they give the devil room to lead them into hell through despair. For this you should know, that all such meddling and disputing about the devil is certainly of the devil. For what the Scripture says about it is not intended to distress and frighten, but rather to comfort the poor **<AGtG 292>** afflicted souls who feel their sin and would gladly be rid of it." (Isa. 17:6: "They were yours, and you gave them to me." Erl. Vol. L. p. 201.)

One must also not allow himself to be misled by thinking:

Luther understands by elect only those who come to faith. Elect means only as much as: a person of whom God wants him to be saved, but whether he achieves his purpose in him, man does not know. Of course, one can argue this against some passages. But one must take other passages by the same author, where he says: An elect person is only the one who perseveres to the end and will certainly be saved. And that is what all our old theologians say. They say that when others are called elect, it is an entirely inauthentic way of speaking.

Now follow some passages about the fact that we do not claim to have an absolute certainty of election.

Gerhard: "An absolute certainty of election and salvation must not be asserted, for that would open the door to carnal security; nor must **uncertainty** and doubt be defended, for that would open the door to despair; rather, one must remain on the middle road: God has made us certain of our salvation, but not certain (here the carnal certainty is to be understood)." (*Loc. de elect. §* 175.) "The infallible promises of God deliver us from doubt, the threats and admonitions of God deliver us from carnal security, and thus the little ship of our faith, following the guiding star of the Word, holds the middle ground between the Scylla of constant doubt and the Charybdis of complete security. We trust God because of the glorious and infallible promises given to us, yet we also fear God because of the weaknesses and temptations of our flesh, and therefore we ask of God with earnest sighs for the gift of constancy, and have confidence that we shall certainly obtain it; yet we ask, with the laying aside of carnal assurance, that our faith may be strengthened by the meditation of the Word and by the use of the Sacraments, and we endeavor to advance daily in the course of godliness." (*L. c. § 110.*)

By absolute certainty is to be understood: I know for certain that I shall be saved, even if I resolve never to go to church again, never to pray and watch, but to put away all means of grace. I am chosen, I must be saved. No Lutheran teaches this certainty. But if I am not to be absolutely certain, it does not follow that I must be uncertain. These are not opposites, but merely indicate that God has made a certain order which he has revealed to me and for the observance of which he gives me his grace. If I were to resolve to the end not to follow this order, I would not be an elect person.

So when a preacher has made his believing listeners certain that the election of grace also concerns them, then he must also say to them: "But now

also act as befits children and heirs of God. All this is not preached that you may serve the world and **<AGtG 293>** the flesh, but that you may remember throughout your lives the great grace he has shown you, and that he took counsel how he wanted to begin to bring you safely through the storms of this world into the harbor of salvation.

Quenstedt: "The pious and faithful can and should be certain of their election to salvation through faith, but not carnally certain. For since election is certain and unchangeable, the pious can and should be certain of it. But precisely this certainty of faith should be connected with a childlike fear and not degenerate into a carnal certainty. To this belongs the consolation of the inscription in heaven Luc 10:20. Paul also points to this certainty in Rom 8:38, 39, where he says that neither present nor future things etc. can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. But this certainty on the part of man is not absolute, but ordered, that is, it does not depend on an absolute decree of God, but takes into account the order of the means ordained by God. Whoever observes God's ordained order well should firmly conclude that he is predestined to salvation. The certainty of election, therefore, is not an absolute, but yet an irrefragable one for the sake of the irrefragable truth of the divine promises." (*L. c. fol. 31.*)

It is well to note that Quenstedt says: assurance is an ordered, *ordinata*, i.e. God has made a certain order in which he wants to save. Thus only those who are in this order can be certain of their election.

This is why he also says: "God does not want the salvation of all men on the condition of faith: 'if they would believe', but also not absolutely, but under a certain order of means. This will of God is therefore not an absolute, but an ordered one, but by no means (to be precise) a conditional one, as the hypothesizers among the Calvinists would have it. For the absolute is not only opposed to the hypothetical and conditional, but also to the ordered and determined by a certain order (*ταξει*)." (*P. III. c. 1. s. 2. q. 1. fol. 21.*)

This is well to be remembered. For if we had a conditional certainty of our election, we would have none at all. We would first have to know for certain that the condition is fulfilled. As long as it was not fulfilled, our certainty would also be suspended. That's not the way it is with us humans, we should not hang and worry until we come to eternity.

These were 2 pieces from which one becomes certain of his election of grace: 1) that one seeks it in Christ and the gospel; 2) in the calling and in faith.

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If we are right in the doctrine of the means of grace, it is not at all possible for us as the called to doubt that we are elect. We must only mean: It is God who preaches the gospel, who baptized me, who made me perfect. How can I still be in doubt that God wants to and will save me? I would <AGtG 294> have to think that God is not serious at all. But it becomes difficult for us to believe and we very often lose sight of the fact that it is God who speaks to us. When the promises of the gospel are proclaimed, God tells each individual: you have my grace. He has not only given his promises, but has also commanded that everyone who hears them should believe them. So when I hear the gospel, it is just as certain as if I looked into the book of life and saw my name.

With regard to the term absolute, the following was also noted: "Absolute" is the opposite of "relative". The latter means: respectively. Absolute means: without any relation. But we have such a certainty that is not absolute, i.e. not one that stands still, we may do what we want. Because then there would be no relationship at all. We see that Chemnitz and Gerhard take "absolute certainty" in this sense and thus want to reject carnal certainty. For if I had certainty that I could be carnally certain, then I would know: I can do what I want, I will be saved. God has absolute certainty, we do not.

Now one of the strongest objections here is this: You cannot know whether you will persevere, and if you cannot know that, you cannot say: I am certain of my election. It is said that temporary believers make all your certainties ashamed. Just as the consumption of the Body and Blood of Christ by the hands of the unworthy shames all the Reformed doctrines about the absence of the Body and Blood in the Lord's Supper.

Let us hear Chemnitz on this subject: "They also oppose the passages which deal with perseverance to the end, and say: even if believers were really certain of present grace, no one is certain whether he will persevere to the end; and since only those will be saved who persevere to the end, there can be no certain confidence with regard to the salvation of believers. I answer, that many do not persevere, but fall from grace, is taught both by Holy Scripture and by experience. But this does not happen because and for the reason that God does not wish to preserve to the end those believers whom he has once received into grace, but it happens because many, through security, unbelief and works of the flesh, pour out the Holy Spirit and cast away faith. Therefore men must not be taught that, however they may behave, they cannot fall from grace.

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For it is written in Romans 11, if they continue in the goodness of God; and in Ephesians 3, if they hold fast their confidence to the end. But they are to be exhorted to put to death the deeds of the flesh through the Spirit and to cling firmly to Christ through faith and to become more and more united to him through the use of the Word and the sacraments, and to ask God for the gift of perseverance, and to fight so that they do not cast away the gift of perseverance through the will of the flesh. And in this way they must not doubt perseverance, but according to the promises of Phil. 1: "He who began the good work in you will carry **<AGtG 295>** it on to completion until the day of Jesus Christ". For we have been called to an eternal fellowship with Christ, not that he should soon cast away those with whom he has joined himself, but 'they shall never perish' (as he says) 'no one will snatch them out of my hand' (John 10:28); 1 Cor. 1: 'He will keep you firm to the end, that you may be blameless until the day of our Lord Jesus Christ'. Thus David says: "I will never again lie down"; John also says: "I write these things to you so that you may know that you have eternal life"; furthermore: "We know that when he appears we shall be like him". Romans 8: "Who will separate us? For I am sure that neither the present nor the future will separate us. 2 Tim. 4: 'The crown of righteousness is laid up for me, which the Lord will give me at that day'. Rom. 5: "We boast in the hope of future glory". These passages clearly show that the believing hope of perseverance does not hover between heaven and earth in wavering doubt." (*Exam. Conc. Trid. Edit. Genev. fol. 172 b.*)

Therefore, because so many do not persevere, I should not doubt that I will persevere. Yes, I should think: even if I should stumble once, the good Lord will seek me again. This is not a carnal certainty, but a reliance on the promises of God.

Similarly, Chemnitz writes: "It is a difficult and miserable question, because we see that many of them, who had begun well, fall away miserably and shamefully; whether and how I may remain and persevere in such great weakness, because it is written: 'He who perseveres to the end shall be saved. But this article gives a comforting answer to those who are called according to God's purpose through the Word, John 10: "My sheep hear my voice, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand"; 1 Cor. 1. He will keep you firm to

the end, for God is faithful, by whom you were called to the fellowship of his Son'; Phil. 1: 'I am confident of this, that he who began the good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Jesus Christ'; 1 Thess. 5: 'God of peace sanctify you, that your spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of Jesus Christ: faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it'; 1 Peter 5: 'The God of all grace, who has called us to his eternal glory in Christ Jesus, the same will also make you complete, strengthen, fortify and establish you'. These beautiful Christian sayings place and base our constancy on this: because he is faithful who has called us to his glory through the word; and even if we stumble at times, fall and do not return soon when he calls **<AGtG 296>** us, this parable gives us the beautiful consolation when it says: "But once he sent out other servants and said: 'Tell the guests to come to the wedding'." (A Sermon on the Gospel Matt. 22. etc. Anno 1573. page E. 2 f.)

Gerhard: "The fifth question is whether the elect sin to the end? which we deny. According to that verse of this Gospel (Matthew 24:24), Calvinists do indeed deny this with us in regard to the elect, but not for the same reason; for they bring forward the absolute reason of impossibility. But Scripture knows nothing of such a thing. Hence we deny that the elect are preserved and saved by an absolute necessity subject to blind fate, as if it were absolutely impossible that they should perish, whatever they might do; but this we say, that they are **infallibly** saved. We likewise deny that the cause of this impossibility is the highest perfection of the elect, but regard as the true cause: 1) God's power, which preserves the elect in faith unto salvation (1 Pet. 1:5) *). (*) Thus by no means mere foreknowledge.); 2) Christ's intercession for the constancy and salvation of the elect (John 17:15, 20); 3) The power of Christ, from whom no one can snatch the sheep out of his hands (John 10:28); 4) The firmness of divine counsel (2 Timothy 2:19); 5) The infallibility of foreknowledge. This, too, we readily admit, that the elect, in view of their imperfect regeneration, are such that they may fall and perish to the end, as much as is in them; but by no means do they in reality (*actu*) fall from grace or perish. Christ assures us of this (besides many other sayings in Scripture) in this Gospel of ours (Matthew 24:22-24) by saying: 'Where it would be possible. Hence it is to be noted that the

controversy is not as much about the **possibility** as about the reality. For on the part of the elect we admit the possibility that they might be lost if they were not preserved by God. But the followers of Huber hold that many could not only be lost, but are also lost in reality itself. They therefore conclude from that verse of this Gospel: 'If these days were not shortened, no man would be saved; but for the elect's sake the days are shortened, that even the elect might fall from God's grace both wholly and to the end; for [they say] if no man were saved, neither would the elect be saved, and consequently perish. But I answer by means of an inversion: If these days were not shortened, then no man would be saved and then the elect could perish. But now, as the text says, the days have been shortened for the sake of the elect. Therefore, since the shortening has **<AGtG 297>** happened, in reality they will not be lost, nor will they be able to be lost." (*Explicatio ελεγκτικη Evang. Dom. p. 1322.*)

The question here is whether the elect can die in mortal sins. For everyone admits that an elect person can fall from grace. But it is impossible that he should not ultimately return to grace before he dies. We see that David fell from grace, and yet he was raised up again. Peter fell from grace, but he came back to it; therefore Christ also says to him: I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. He does not mean that there was never a time when he did not believe, but that he died in faith.

The elect do not perish because that would be absolutely impossible, for then they would have to be in such a state that they could not perish. But God is in such a state that it is impossible. Some admit that the elect cannot be lost, but they say that this is only because God knew it beforehand. Since God cannot err, they must also be saved. But as true as this is, it is not the real reason. Gerhard says: "It is God's power that preserves the elect in faith for salvation. We do not want to take away God's honor. He deserves the honor that we are not condemned who stand in faith and hold to the election of grace.

Our opponents are not Huberians, but they believe that the doctrine of election is nothing other than the doctrine that God wants to save people and has made the order of salvation, so that the doctrine of election is not a special doctrine at all. And yet in our Formula of Concord it is said that the doctrine of election by grace should not be practiced without the following eight points. These are mentioned, and now comes a new passage which shows what is meant by election,

and adds: but you must not preach this without that, otherwise you will plunge your hearers into carnal security or despair.

John Winckelmann also writes about the fact that the thought of insisting on one's election should not make one uncertain: "Some argue that the elect can fall from grace through reigning sins, just as David lost faith and God's grace through committing adultery and murder. Thus it may happen that certain men are elect who will not attain salvation, and election extends further than perseverance in faith and the grace of God, likewise salvation. I answer: I grant that the elect may fall into besetting sins, and lose faith, the Holy Spirit, and God's grace in them; but I add, because election is according to God's providence, that they rise again by a true conversion, as the example of David, Peter, and others testifies; otherwise the providence of God would err, which is impossible." (*Disputat, th. in academ. Giess. hab. Tom. V, p. 178.*) **<AGtG 298>** "Those who are born again may fall from grace not only wholly, but also to the end; but the elect may fall wholly, but not to the end, but only for a time." (*L. c. Tom. VI. p. 86.*)

B. Menzer: "It is true, however, that the faith of the elect cannot be overthrown to the end, for otherwise they would not be elect. For all and only those who persevere in faith to the end are elect, and all and only the elect persevere in faith to the end." (*L. c. T. VII p. 499.*)

P. Leyser: "Here we should also note the different uses of the word 'choose'. In this passage (John 6:70) Christ says: 'Have I not chosen you twelve? Further on, however, in chapter 13. (v. 18) he says to these twelve: "I do not say of you all; I know which I have chosen". These two scriptural passages are not in conflict with each other, because in them Christ speaks of a different election. In the first passage Christ speaks of election to the apostleship, in the second passage of election to salvation, to the communion of saints and to the kingdom of heaven. Judas fell out of the first election, and another received his bishopric, Acts 1:20; of the second, Christ says in Matthew 24:24 that it is impossible for the elect to be deceived into error. It is therefore certain that Judas was of the number of the chosen apostles, but never of the number of the elect to be saved. For "the sure foundation of God is established and has this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are His. 2 Tim. 2:18." (*Harm. ev. ad Joh. 13, 18. Tom. I. fol. 1503 sq.*)

Concerning this, that the fact that one must persevere to the end

is no reason for the faithful to doubt that they are elect.

*) [*) Minutes of the Secretary]

Another reason for which a believing Christian in his weakness may doubt whether he is elect is this: that he finds such great obstacles to his salvation.

Who among us should not have wished to die soon because he sees such dreadful difficulties before him on his way to eternal life? Who among us has not often thought: God has graciously helped me through this far, I am still standing in faith, although I was often close to suffering shipwreck; God has held me with his almighty hand of grace; but what will it be like over a year, yes over ten or even over twenty years? will I then still be standing in faith? What tribulation awaits me, what shame, what painful illness, what persecution, what terrible temptation to sin and apostasy will I perhaps encounter? All those who deny the certainty of election also say that it is a sacrilege to believe that we are the chosen ones, because there is still such a long way to go until death, on which we could easily lose faith again. But this is nothing other than the voice of the serpent, who does not grant us children of God this most necessary consolation, that our crown in heaven is already laid up for us and that the good Lord, if we only remain in the order in which God has called us to salvation, will also help us to his heavenly kingdom. Our dear elders thought differently.

Thus P. Leyser writes: "To be sure, the sheep of Christ have many enemies of their salvation, above all Satan, the world and their own flesh, so that they often begin to waver in their conscience, fearing to suffer shipwreck in their faith. But Christ shows here **<AGtG 299>** the firm anchor of salvation and testifies that his sheep should be completely certain of their salvation."

It is incomprehensible how one can say that it has never been taught in our church that one can be certain of one's election, when there is no other doctrine in the church that is more glorious and more numerous than this one. Who would want to be a Christian and go through all the humiliation of the world, all the struggle, all the hardship, and still think: but whether I will be saved, I certainly do not know? Paul says that if we did not have this hope, we would be the most miserable of all creatures; and now someone comes to us and says: no, you must not have this hope, everything can turn out quite differently. But we will not allow ourselves to be deprived of this hope; we have

enough misery in this poor life, and what alone keeps us upright, shall we also give up? We do not; on the contrary, we can only lament the fact that we believe so little. We ought, of course, to be firm and certain of it, but we can do so little. Our flesh always clings to us, it will not allow us to believe that we are chosen; therefore we must always groan: I believe, Lord, help my unbelief! But according to our opponents, we should think that it is still an open question whether we will go to heaven or to hell. No, we don't go along with that.

Leyser continues: "But what is the basis of their certainty? Christ answers: 'In my hand. (John 10:28) It is that hand of which it is said in the Book of Wisdom 2:1: 'The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment touches them. For he testifies that his hand and the Father's hand are one and the same. "The Father who has given them to me is greater than all, and no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. And of course no one will deny that the heavenly Father is greater and more powerful than all visible and invisible creatures, and that he cannot be defeated (*cogi*) by anyone. From this he concludes: "So no one will snatch them out of my hand. ... From these privileges of Christ's sheep, we can also infer the certainty of the salvation of all believers. For 1) the Father has given the elect to the Son to keep them. So he cannot neglect them. 2) The Son has taken them over as something to be preserved (*depositum*). So he will faithfully keep them, knowing that this is pleasing to the Father's will."

Yet we will shy away from saying: “Christ has indeed received from his Father the office of preserving his own and ensuring that they are not condemned; but he does not do this, he administers his office badly.” That would be blasphemy. And why does the dear Savior tell us that he has received this office? To make us believe it. Leyser calls us, in so far as the Lord has to preserve us, *depositum*, that is, we are, as it were, a deposit of the Savior in the bank of the world; he claims this again when we die. **<AGtG 300>**

Leyser continues: "3) The Lord recognizes His own. So they cannot perish from his ignorance or lack of concern."

Let us write this comfort deep in our hearts: The Lord recognizes his own! Christ does not say: Oh, I have completely overlooked one; what a pity, now he has been condemned; indeed, who can always pay attention to everything? No, he forgets no one, for he knows us all by name.

Leyser continues: "4) He gives them eternal life. For this is why he has redeemed them from eternal death, to give them the Spirit of life

so that they may live in it forever. 5) And he will not let any of them perish for ever. Thus the elect may be troubled and tempted in faith, so that at times they think it is done for them; but the Lord is faithful, who will not allow anyone to be tempted beyond ability, but will make the temptation so enduring that they can bear it, 1 Cor. 10:13. Finally, no one can snatch them out of Christ's hand. For all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him. Therefore we can proclaim aloud with Paulo with confidence (*securi*) and great courage: I am sure that no creature will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord', Rom. 8. This is our certainty of salvation, which we seek as one founded and placed in Christ's hand. But those who seek their salvation either on the merits of the saints or on their own works, let them see what great assurance they have; it is certainly natural for most of them to doubt their salvation, and for some to despair of it." (*Harmon. ev. ju 10, 27. 28. Tom. I. fol. 2188. sq.*)

Egidius Hunnius especially emphasizes the doctrine of Christian hope in order to refute the papists, who say that no Christian can be certain of his salvation. And Hunnius is quite right to do so, for hope is what distinguishes a Christian from the pagans. Paul calls out to Christians that they should not mourn like those who have no hope, that is, like the Gentiles. So a Christian shows above all that he is a Christian, that he has a hope of salvation in his heart and that he confesses it. This is what particularly startles the world when it realizes that a Christian is certain of his salvation. That is a powerful sermon for them. The thought immediately occurs to them: that is true, these Christians are blessed people; in their simplicity they think they will certainly go to heaven; and then a thought of God enters their hearts: oh, if only you were such a blessed person! But when will they think this way? Only when Christians are certain of their election. For only then can they say: I know what my eternal destiny is; may death come, it takes nothing from me, it brings me everything. Yes, when the world hears this, it is often awakened, only that this spark is often soon snuffed out again by the love of earthly things. **<AGtG 301>** Who has not noticed that worldly people envy Christians because of their certain hope of salvation? Indeed, who has not experienced something similar from us when he was still unconverted? When he heard a true, living Christian speak with his joy of conviction: I know in whom I believe; I know, praise God, where I am going, it went through his heart and then he thought: I also want to become such a blessed person who can look to the future with joy, and now he was converted.

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Hunnius writes: "A doctrine which contends with the hope of Christians is necessarily false and erroneous, since the whole of Holy Scripture aims at our having hope through the patience and consolation of Scripture. But now the dogma of the popes about doubting argues against Christian hope. It must therefore be false and contrary to the meaning and intention of Scripture. The second sentence of this conclusion is proved as follows. God's Word describes the hope of believers, that it may not put to shame those who hope, according to the following extremely important sayings and testimonies of the divine Spirit: Ps. 31: 'Lord, I trust in you, I will never be put to shame'. Romans 5: 'Tribulation brings patience, but patience brings experience, but experience brings hope, but hope does not put to shame. Hence the epistle to the Hebrews 6:18- 19. compares it (hope) to a secure and firm anchor, on which the ship stands firm against the onslaught of wind and weather. 'We who have,' he says, 'take refuge and hold fast to the hope offered, which we have as a sure and steadfast anchor for our souls. Hence he exhorts us to hold fast the confidence and the glory of hope to the end. Especially remarkable is what is written in Heb. 10: 'Let us go our way with a true heart, in full faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water; and let us hold fast the profession of our hope and not waver, for he is faithful who promised it. In this saying there are almost as many proofs against the doubting of the preachers as there are words, and especially that he calls the confession of our hope one that does not waver. Hence Peter also reminds us that Christians are born again of God to a 'living hope', and soon after adds: 'Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and set your hope wholly on the grace that is offered you'. But those who teach that a man must still be in doubt as to whether he is in God's grace, whether he is an heir of eternal life, cannot teach with the prophets and apostles a hope that does not put to shame, a hope that is firm and sure and like the firmest anchor, a living hope, a hope that does not waver, a hope that hopes wholly in God's grace; but by condemning and trampling underfoot this Christian hope in an utterly unworthy manner, they put in its place a hope that could be put to shame, a hope that wavers and wavers and finally plunges man from doubt into the abyss of despair, of which **<AGtG 302>** doubtful and undecided hope the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures know absolutely nothing. But since, says one, hope has to do with the future goods of eternal life,

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who can be sure that he will fight his way through all temptations, since there are so many obstacles in the world, the power of Satan is so great, while the weakness of our flesh is so great? — Answer: If we were to fix our eyes either on the weakness of our flesh, or on the power of Satan, or on those obstacles which oppose the pious in the world, we would not only have to **doubt** our salvation, but **despair** altogether**.** But all this must be contrasted with the firm consolations of the Holy Spirit, namely, that he who is in us is greater than he who is in the world, 1 John 4, than he who according to Christ's testimony is judged and cast out. And what the Savior says: 'Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world'. And again, what it is written, that they which are born of God overcome the world, 1 John 5; yea, in all the evils of this world by him that loved them they overcome far, Rom. 8; also that saying of Peter, that they which believe are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, 1 Pet. 1, even as Christ also saith, 'No man shall pluck my sheep out of my hand; my Father which hath given them me is greater than all, and no man can pluck them out of my hand? This "is faithful," says Paul, "who will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will make the temptation so to cease, that we may be able to bear it," 1 Cor. 10, and to Philippians chap. 1.'I am confident of this, that he who began the good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Jesus Christ'; 2 Thess. 3: 'Faith is not for everyone, but the Lord is faithful, who will strengthen you and keep you from evil'. But if any man diligently and deliberately turns away from God again, when by the power of the Holy Spirit, through whom he has been born again and with whom he has been endowed, he could persevere in goodness and keep what he has begun to the end, such a one is himself the cause of his perishing. Nor can this prevent those who are seriously concerned about their salvation. Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit makes them certain of their salvation through the promises made to them, so that if they do not voluntarily fall away from good, but desire to remain in God's grace, no power of the devil can tear them away from God and Christ: He exhorts them again to crucify their flesh together with its lusts, to abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, to watch, if they stand, that they do not fall, to hold fast what they have, lest anyone rob them of their crown or deprive them of their palm, that they may work out their salvation with fear and trembling. But all these exhortations have nothing to do with nourishing papist doubts or

weakening the hope of Christians, but only with driving out carnal and sleepy security." (*Articulus de justific*. 1590. p. 81-85.) **<AGtG 303>**

According to the definition of the word "faith" in Hebrews 11:1, a Christian has to do not only with present goods, namely that he has forgiveness of his sins and a gracious God, but also with future goods, in such a way that he knows: I will not miss them. Even David in the Old Testament was certain that he would not be ashamed of his hope, how much more shall we be! Visible ships have anchors, but they are not always firm; but Christians have an anchor that is firm, so that their ship cannot sink. Therefore a Christian should boast of the hope of eternal life, just as we confess in the third article that we believe not only in the forgiveness of sins but also in eternal life. This does not mean: I believe that other people attain the same, but that I attain it, that it is given to me, and that it will remain with me for all eternity. It is true that our opponents claim that the word "I believe" must be understood here in a twofold sense, first for "having certainty", as in the forgiveness of sins, of which I am to be certain by faith; then as "having it conditionally", as in eternal life. But now consider this! Then we must say to our children: Be careful! You must certainly believe one thing, but not certainly the other, for here the word faith has a different meaning! That is foolishness. We should also hold fast to the confession of hope; but that is a beautiful confession, if I confess the articles of faith and, when the world asks me: Will you also go to heaven with your religion? I answer: Yes, I do not know. Then we would confess that we are no better off than the heathen. No, I should confess: I hope it firmly and certainly, for the hope of Christians is not like the hope of the world. With the latter many things do not come to pass; but with my hope I know that it will come to pass. But no one should allow himself to be disturbed by the fact that he sees that the children of God are always exhorted to remain steadfast, warned not to fall away, and threatened with eternal damnation if they cast away their faith. This is not because their hope is one that might be lacking, but because God wants to bring his elect to eternal life in this way alone, to lead them into his order of grace and keep them there despite all the temptations of the devil, the world and our flesh. That is why a preacher should regard all his church members as elect, but he should treat them as if he first had to make them elect. He is not instructed to say to them: I don't need to preach anything more to you; you are the elect, you are going to heaven!

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No, that would be a shameful abuse of doctrine; but let him say thus: He who believes in Christ only confidently considers himself elect, but take heed lest he fall! When people say, "Why then?" I say, "Yes, dear friend, God took all this into account when he chose you. He thought about how he would bring you to heaven through many a struggle and hardship. If you are now an elect person, you will say: Lead me, God, as you will, give me good or bad days, peace or discord, friends or enemies, health or sickness, give me a dear family in which I can take pleasure, or take them all away from me, **<AGtG 304>** give me life or death; I am content with it all, do with me what you will; whatever may happen to me, it is all right with me. You have to tell people that this is how the elect speak. For the good Lord did not say: this man shall go to heaven, and now I will take him by the hair and drag him in, but how God does this can be seen right now in the way people are led by God: they are called, led to repentance, brought to faith in Jesus Christ, the Savior and Reconciler of the world; then they are trained in sanctification; then they come into temptation and distress, and finally bitter death and the hour of dissolution comes upon them. This has been God's eternal counsel, and I must submit to it.

These are also important words: "place your hope entirely in the grace that is offered to you." East the tempter comes to me and says: "How can you hope with such certainty that you will be saved? what else is in store for you in this world, so that you can come to fall! Then I can say: Of course I would be foolish and foolish to be sure of my salvation if it were in my own hands; but I place my hope entirely in God's grace; not half in God's grace and half in my own strength, but in God's grace alone, that is a sure anchor. What foolishness, then, to doubt, since the apostle himself exhorts us to hope wholly in the hand of God! Indeed, anyone who teaches me that I should doubt in this matter plunges me into despair, for he says: you must place your hope in yourself. Whoever does this must despair, for he knows and experiences that he is dust. But he who knows and believes the doctrine of election knows all the more what a blessed man he has become by his conversion to Christ; for if he knows that he will certainly be saved, he laughs at the whole world with its lumpishness, at the covetous with their gold boxes, at the high offices with their miserable dignities, which are nothing but vapor. He knows in whom he believes, and therefore also knows that God will take him from this poor world into the heaven of glory, so that there he may rejoice eternally in God's mercy. This truly does not make him

carnally secure, but rather joyful and glad to lay down his life for his Lord Christ. Therefore, while this doctrine enters the hearts of Christians, especially those who are under attack, like sweet honey, the counter-doctrine is pure poison for them, which kills the life of faith. Now if someone to whom I have presented the doctrine of election, but who has fallen away from the faith, should say to me: You see, there is nothing to this whole doctrine, for I have not this consolation that I may be saved, I will answer him: You are mistaken, my friend, for I have never said to you: Do what you want, God will keep you by compulsion, but I have taught you a quite different way in which the good God has chosen his children, namely, not only for heaven and salvation, but also for the way to it. If you do not want to go this way, then shout about yourself when you go to hell, but not about God and the doctrine of the election of grace. **<AGtG 305>**

Nor is this an obstacle to the certainty of our election, that it is written: "Be saved with fear and trembling," as many think. It is said that if, according to God's word, every Christian should work out his salvation with fear and trembling, then he should do so with the thought: you can and perhaps will perish, so work diligently so that you will not be condemned; for that is what matters, that is what it depends on, that you work properly. But with these words God does not say at all: you must not be sure of your salvation in this life; for we are not to do anything for our salvation; God has already done everything for that; but he has made an order in which he wants to lead me to this salvation. On one leaf it says: He who believes shall be saved; on the other, he who wants to go to heaven must repent, believe, do good works, remain faithful in the cross and in tribulation. I accept both of these. But when I read what an elect person must do, I do not conclude that this is the condition under which God wants to save me, but that this is only the way in which I am to be saved. If I do not want to submit to this order, then it becomes obvious that I am not an elect person, not because of God's fault but because of my own, for God wants all people to be saved.

On this Balduin writes: "Does St. Paul cause us to doubt our salvation, when he says that we are to bring it about with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12)? I answer: This is the pernicious doctrine of the papists, that no one can be sure of his salvation, or, as the Tridentine Conciliar says in the 9th chapter of the 6th session, that no one is able to know with such certainty of faith that there can be no delusion that he has obtained God's grace, and in the 12th chapter that no one can be sure of his salvation as long as he is in this

mortality. Chapter 12, that no one, as long as he lives in this mortality, should be certain that he is indeed (*omnino*) in the number of the predestinated. Hence they call the certainty of salvation a groundless presumption. This error is widely defended by Bellarmin in his 3rd Book of Justification, and among other things he also misuses Paul's saying in his cause: because Paul exhorts all believers to fear and trembling in the work of salvation, therefore no one can be certain of his salvation. However, the holy apostle undoubtedly did not contradict himself. In his letter to the Romans 8:38, 39, he writes with great joy of faith that he is certain that neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities nor powers, neither things present nor things to come, neither things high nor things low, nor any other creature, can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. So how could he here (Phil. 2:12) cause us to doubt grace and our salvation? Nor is it valid to say that Paul writes this only of his salvation and that he had this certainty from special divine revelation. For he expressly writes that 'we' cannot be separated from the **<AGtG 306>** love of God, that is, all believers. Nor was it necessary for Paul to boast of his certainty to the Romans, but he wanted to encourage others by his example and make them certain of their salvation; for that is why he writes that grace was given to him for the instruction of those who were to believe to eternal life 1 Tim. 1:16. Hence Bernard refers Paul's words to all believers in general in the third month of Pentecost. 'Be sure,' he says, 'that neither death nor life nor the other things which Paul enumerates, in as many ways as they are bold, can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. But that he had this certainty from a revelation, he does not say himself, nor can it be proved from any letter. He shows another reason for his certainty, namely the teaching of the gospel of the death and resurrection of Christ, of his sitting at the right hand of the Father and of his intercession for us, and from this he concludes his certainty and that of all believers concerning the grace of God and salvation."

Even if Paul had had the certainty of his election only for himself from direct revelation, he would not have written this to the Romans in order to boast and show what he had ahead of the other Christians, but so that the Christians would see that they could be completely certain of his election. They should learn from him to allow such certainty to enter their hearts. For all the grace that Paul had received as an apostle was given to him by God for the benefit of those who would believe to eternal life. But this is purely out of thin air, that Paul was certain of his election by special revelation;

there is nothing of this in the Bible. He does not say, after he has sung his triumphal song: God has revealed this to me, but he [Paul] gives as the reason for his certainty a reason that all Christians have, namely that Christ died and rose again and ascended to heaven and is making intercession. He rose again not only for Paul, but for all Christians and makes intercession for them all. This is also how that old monk of the Dark Ages, St. Bernard, interprets this passage to show that every Christian can and should be certain of his salvation.

Balduin continues: "But since he recommends 'fear and trembling' in his letter to the Philippians, we should know that Paul does not mean a servant-like fear that flees and shrinks back from God and has no trust in his mercy, but a childlike fear that reverently shuns God as a Father and offends him in any way. He therefore puts a stop to our flesh so that it does not rule in us and drive out God's grace. *) [*) So not to make us uncertain, but to keep us in our certainty]. This fear recommended to us by Paul is thus opposed to : 1) Epicurean certainty, by which faith is stifled, the Holy Spirit is grieved, and the grace of God is lost. 2) Spiritual pride and **<AGtG 307>** presumption, so that we do not exalt ourselves in confidence in our gifts, but cling entirely to the grace and mercy of God, endeavoring not to fall from it. Against this, Bellarmin remarks in the 12th chapter of his 3rd book on justification: "All this takes place with those to whom their predestination is unknown, but not with those who are quite certain of it. For those who are convinced that they will certainly be saved can have no fear of losing their salvation; indeed, they must not fear it if they believe this with a certainty of faith, just as they believe that Christ is God, for by that fear they would do dishonor to the faith. He also adds: 'The Holy Spirit would lead the elect to unbelief if he were to lead them to fear the loss of salvation. So much for Bellarmin. But this is true of servile fear, in which there is no trust in God and which produces pure unbelief. Of this fear we say that it should be far from believers. For they have not received a servant spirit, that they should fear again, but a childlike spirit, through which they cry out: Abba, dear Father. Rom. 8:15. Now the childlike fear is not without faith, but is a fruit of it; for the godly fear and reverence God,

lest they lose faith and fall from the grace of God, which is done by works against conscience. *) [*) We are just certain that God has decided to save us in the order of repentance, faith and sanctification]. This (filial) fear is therefore always connected with the certainty of faith, because the pious, as long as they avoid mortal sin, have no reason to doubt God's grace or their salvation. For this reason we are commanded to serve God with fear and to rejoice with trembling, Ps. 2:11. Joy is a matter of certainty, service is a matter of childlike fear, of which we are speaking here. We therefore reject the papal doctrine of doubt as a pernicious and horrible one (*horrendum dogma*), to which God's promises and oaths are opposed. Augustine says in his interpretation of the 88th Psalm: 'God has said this, promised this; if this is too little, he has sworn this; because the promise is firm, not according to our works, but according to his mercy, no one may preach with fear what he may not doubt'." (*Disputatio de cap. 2. ep. ad Phil. Wittebergae 1617. p. 61. sqq.*)

Although in a Christian family a child really knows that his father loves him and does not refuse him any request, he does not approach him boldly to demand what he wants, but asks reverently, and is careful not to offend him in any way. The child does not do this **<AGtG 308>** because he doubts his father's love; on the contrary, because he is so sure of this undeserved love, he trembles at the thought that he might cause him grief. So it is still more the case with the children of God. These also walk with fear and trembling; not as if they feared not to receive salvation, but precisely the certainty of their salvation drives them to thank the dear God for it, and thus to beware of sins that offend him. This saying should therefore not make us uncertain of our election, but quite certain. For indeed, when the flesh again begins to reign in us, the spirit is dampened, faith becomes weak and feeble, and finally it must die out. Because God does not want the light of faith of the elect to go out, he uses such warnings and admonitions, even threats. God does it here just like a doctor. He does not doubt the power of the medicine he prescribes for the sick person, but he still gives him all kinds of admonitions. He says to him: don't eat salad, don't go out in the draft, and the like. If the patient were now to think that the medicine may be of no use because the doctor has given me other rules of conduct,

he would be very much mistaken. These rules are only to prevent the patient from nullifying the power of the medicine in his body. So it is here also. My salvation is prepared; it is given to me through the gospel, and I receive and keep it through faith. But so that I do not lose it through unbelief, God warns me against apostasy. Not only should I not fall away *finally*, i.e. at the last hour, but not at all. God does not want me to stand today and fall away the next month and be raised the month after that, and so on until death. It is true that Scripture says that the righteous fall seven times; but this does not mean falling from grace — that would be a terrible thought — but what we call stumbling, sinning out of weakness, in which faith remains. It is quite reasonable to say that fear and trembling are only found in those who are not sure of their salvation; therefore we should not be sure of it, for Paul demands fear and trembling. But we do not want to make God's word plausible before reason, but want to believe it, and where we cannot rhyme it, we leave it unrhymed and yet accept it; the good Lord will know how to rhyme it. Therefore, whoever wants to believe God's word, let him come to us; but whoever wants to make it plausible to reason, let him go to those who deny the certainty of election. But of course, what will happen to those who make God a liar! What an evil sign it is that our opponents have not only the papists, but also among them such a cunning and crafty guarantor of their doctrine as this Bellarmin is! He obviously teaches the uncertainty of salvation in order to support the Roman doctrine of works, that man must bring about his own salvation. The apostle does not say to the Philippians: you must tremble and tremble before the majesty of Christ, you must not draw near to him, nor have confidence in him, for you do not know whether you will not finally become servants of the world; but he rather connects his exhortation with this meaning: you hope to be saved; therefore refrain from everything **<AGtG 309>** that could weaken or even take away this hope. Once the apostle says: "We have not received a servant spirit, that we should fear again", and yet here he still speaks of fear; therefore he must speak here of a different fear than there, for otherwise he would contradict himself. Here he speaks of such a fear, which is a fruit of faith; for there he contrasts servile fear with faith. So here this fear cannot overthrow the certainty of salvation, for faith itself is certainty. On the contrary, the stronger faith is, the greater is the fruit of it, namely the fear of offending God. It is extremely important that in the 2nd Psalm these two things are placed side by side: Serve the Lord with fear,

and rejoice with trembling. Here the Holy Spirit himself has revealed that these two things can, indeed should, exist side by side: Joy of faith and trembling. So it is not true when reason says: where the one is, there cannot be the other, and vice versa; oh yes, both can and should be there, the Holy Spirit himself says so. If anyone has not experienced this, let him believe the Holy Spirit; but what Christian is there who has not experienced this? As certain as it is that Scripture teaches election by grace and the certainty of it, we preachers should also bring it to the pulpit with confidence and joy. We should not be afraid that we might confuse the hearers by it. Where it is preached correctly and in its entire context, it does not arouse any temptation at all, apart from the fact that the devil attaches himself to all divine things. We often have no idea how he can often find a hole through which he can penetrate with his poison; after all, he even plunges some people into security through the doctrine of justification. If we were to withhold the doctrine of election from our hearers, we would conceal from them one of the most precious, comforting and awakening doctrines of salvation, do great harm, and burden our consciences most heavily. -

Finally, however, this must not be an obstacle to the certainty of our salvation, that Scripture teaches that even believers can fall away.

On this Chemnitz says: "They (the papists) invoke these and similar scriptural sayings 1 Cor. 10: 'He who stands there, may well take heed lest he fall'; Phil. 2: 'Work out your salvation with fear and trembling'; Rom. 11: 'Be not proud, but fear'; 1 Pet. 1: 'Conduct your walk with fear as long as you live here'; Proverbs 28: 'Blessed is he who fears in every way'. He gives a general answer to these passages. For they warn us that our conviction of the certainty of salvation should not degenerate into a carnal security by which faith itself is stifled and extinguished; and that we should not give ourselves over to sinful desires, for thereby faith is driven out of the heart. And if we do not continue in goodness, we will be cut off. Rom. 11 But faith does not remain in those who follow evil desires without repentance. These passages, then, are not sermons on the doubtfulness (*dubitatione*) of faith, but admonitions that faith, **<AGtG 310>** which has the assurance of salvation, should not be extinguished by assurance, nor driven out by works of the flesh, but that it should continue to exercise itself in contention against the flesh, so that grace, the Holy Spirit and the assurance of salvation may not be poured out through the will of the flesh. Some passages of this kind also

bring their weakness before the eyes of the believers, not that they may turn faith into doubt, but that the believers may not exalt themselves in trusting in their gifts, but that they may cling to the Lord completely and cling ever more ardently and strongly to the mercy promised for Christ's sake." (op. cit. *fol.* 172 b. 173 a.)

An elect person should not be certain, for that would necessarily take away the certainty of his election. Therefore the Holy Spirit comes and warns us faithfully against apostasy; not as if he thought that if I did not do this, then God's providence would be deceptive, then God would have deceived himself, but on the contrary, because this is part of the election of grace, that God wants to bring us to salvation by means of struggle, watchfulness, prayer, the use of the means of grace, etc.: that is why the Holy Spirit warns us.

Likewise, the Apology of the Formula of Concord teaches: "They accuse us of weakening the power of the general promises, since the Book of Concord, p. 326, says that some of the **converts** even fall away from God and perish, since otherwise it professes that the salvation of the faithful is certain, etc.". But this, too, is a loud encouragement. For the general promises remain firm and strong one way as the other, although not all who are converted persevere in them to the end. Should God's promises be ineffective, weak or inept for the sake of those who turn away from conversion and weave themselves into the filth of this world (2 Pet. 2), adorn Satan's house (Luc. 11), defile the Holy Spirit (Heb. 10)? Far be it from us! For the fact that even the converted can fall and depart is certain and irrefutable from the sayings of Scripture, and from this teaching the believers are not uncertain of their salvation. For Scripture nowhere teaches of the certainty of the believers' salvation in this way: If they remain converted or believe in Christ, or if they fall away or apostatize and give their members over to the weapons of unrighteousness, they should be no less certain of their salvation, for once converted they cannot apostatize again, and even if they apostatize or do whatever they want, they must still be saved; but rather teaches them that those who are converted should not rely on it or be sure because they have once been converted, but should watch and pray that they may not fall into temptation (Matt. 26.), work for their salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2.), devote all their diligence to it and present virtue in faith, item, the more diligence to make their calling and election sure (2 Pet. 1.); **<AGtG 311>** not that the believer's salvation stands and is based on such watching, praying, working, diligence and the like. (for this certainty rests solely on the merit and blood of Jesus Christ, and otherwise neither on this nor on that), but that the converted may not imagine that they do as they please,

that they stand still or depart, that they live in sin or avoid sin, but that they are nevertheless certain of their salvation. For the doctrine of eternal election is not given for this purpose, that it should strengthen or cause such certainty in the hearts of the converted. Therefore this doctrine must be held with great modesty, when it is spoken of the certainty of salvation in and among believers, so that it does not confirm carnal security, but that care is taken that this doctrine is taught only for the comfort of believers and against security or despair in the church of Christ; which does not happen, however, when one speaks so immodestly of these high mysteries as has been heard so far, that our opponent does and would also like to force the same from us." (op. cit. fol. 210 a. b.)

The Lord had expressly said to the apostles, with the exception of Judas, on the day before his death: "I know which I have chosen"; a few hours later he called out to them: "Watch and pray, lest you fall into temptation." Do the disciples say: "Why should we watch? You have told us that we are the chosen ones, so we cannot be lost; you will see to it that you do not become a liar to us? No, they were not such rational people as those who think that the certainty of election cancels out watching; but they accepted the Lord's commandment with a willing heart, except that they immediately carried it out badly. Indeed, the Lord even tells Peter that he had prayed for him that his faith might not cease. He tells him: "Be sure that you will be saved, for I have chosen you. I know that you will fall from grace again if you deny me by cursing and swearing falsely, but I will restore your faith — what a wonderful example of the certainty of election! — Nevertheless, Peter truly did not fall into carnal security. The believers alone are the elect, therefore only the believers can be certain of their election. The certainty of election is therefore not a carnal certainty, but a certainty of faith. If, for example, a person who has gotten drunk as a pig and is lying in a ditch were to claim that I preached that one should be certain of one's election, and therefore it could not harm him if he also rolled around in the dunghill of sin, he would be very much mistaken. If he says that God will see to it that he gets to heaven because he keeps to his election, I say, no; for I did not tell you to be sure in the flesh, but to be sure in faith; but you no longer have faith, so I have no consolation for you, only God's wrath.

However, it is right to say, and we have also said it in our earlier discussion of this doctrine, that an elect person cannot fall, or if he falls, that he will be raised up again in faith.

No devil, no world, no hell can change this; come what may, if a man is chosen, he will go to heaven. If anyone were to conclude from this that we teach an absolute certainty, he would misunderstand us greatly. We have never taught this; we **<AGtG 312>** only speak of an absolute certainty of salvation on the part of God, not on the part of man. God knows my salvation with absolute certainty. If, for example, an elect person were to lie there drunk like a beast, God knows for certain that he will be righteously converted and finally be saved. So even if someone has fallen into the most abominable sin after he has already been in the right faith, he will certainly be saved if he is an elect person, because God knew in advance that he would convert just as righteously as the poor thief on the cross. Nevertheless, no Christian may live safely and carefree and think: Oh, I may be lying here drunk now, but I am an elect person, so my drinking will do me no harm. No! for the certainty of election is not carnal security, but the certainty of faith. But to hope to be saved in drunkenness is the grossest carnal security.

Thus Quenstedt also writes: "'He who thinks he is standing may well see to it that he does not fall. 1 Cor. 10:12. These words are not opposed to the confidence of faith (*πληροφορια*) of the Spirit in the pious and born-again, but to the security of the flesh, so that they do not slacken in the danger of godliness and fall again from God's grace, faith and the Holy Spirit. — Ps 35:24: "If he falls, he will not be thrown away, for the Lord will raise him up" (*erigit*). Note: the future raising up of the elect necessarily presupposes the fall into sin and promises only the preservation from impenitence lasting to the end." (*L. c. fol. 31.*)

Similarly, the Scandinavian theologian Brochmand writes: "What the Arminians or Belgian Remonstrants teach about the certainty of salvation, they themselves say in these words: 'How a true believer can be certain that he will persevere in faith, godliness, and charity, as it belongs to believers, we cannot see.' The view of the papists does not differ much from the Arminians' assertion. For the papists teach that no one can be certain in this life whether he belongs to the number of the elect without a special divine revelation. Read *Concil. Trid. Sess. 6. cap. 12. 13*. We oppose this extremely dangerous proposition of faith (*dogmati longe periculosissimo*) on various grounds. First, this doubt concerning salvation accuses God of lying. 1 John 5:10 says: Whoever does not believe God makes him a liar. But God now quite definitely promises eternal salvation to the believers John 3:18; 1 John 5:11-12;

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1 Peter 1:5, and with an oath John 5:24; Ezek. 3:11; Heb. 6:17. Secondly, it (this doubt) definitely conflicts with the ultimate purpose of the revelation of the doctrine of eternal predestination to salvation, which is that we may be certain of our salvation. This is shown by the end of the 8th chapter of the letter to the Romans from v. 28 to the end. The following words of Paul in Romans 11:29 **<AGtG 313>** do the same: 'God's gifts and calling will not cause him to repent' (i.e. he will not feel remorse for them). The same is proved by these sayings of holy scripture: 2 Tim. 2, 19: 'The sure foundation of God standeth, having this seal, that the Lord knoweth them that are his'. John 10:27, 28: "No one will snatch my sheep out of my hand, and they will never perish. Phil. 1, 6: 'He who began the good work in you will carry it out until the day of Jesus Christ. Cap. 2, 13.: "It is God who works in you both to will and to do. 1 Peter 1:5: 'By the power of God you will be saved for salvation. 1 John 3:19, 20: 'By this we know that we are of the truth, and can satisfy our heart before him: that if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.' Thirdly, doubt concerning salvation has its origin in the corruption of nature and is highly displeasing to God and is the mark of a man who is running to eternal destruction, James 1:6, 7: 'But let him ask in faith, not doubting; for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. Such a man does not think that he will receive anything from the Lord. 2 Cor. 13, 5: 'Try yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Or do you not know yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you? Unless you are not able. Finally, the pious, who are presented to us for imitation in Holy Scripture, are praised because of their faithful confidence, which is quite contrary to doubt about salvation. Matt. 8:8, 9, 10; 15:22, 28; Rom. 4:18; Heb. 11. entirely. Let us therefore bid farewell to the papist and Arminian doubt of salvation and remain unconfused with it.

"But both the papists and the Arminians defend their doubts about salvation in several ways. The reasons which lead the above-mentioned authors into battle are, in sum, these: 1) Holy Scripture everywhere exhorts us that we must always tremble at the certainty of salvation. Proverbs 27:1: "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what will happen today. Chap. 28:14.: 'Blessed is he who always fears. Eccl. 9:1: "No man knows the love or hatred of anyone he has before him. Rom. 11, 20: 'You stand by faith; do not be proud, but fear.' 1 Cor. 10:12: 'Let him who stands take heed lest he fall. Phil.

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2:12: "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Revelation 3:11: "Hold what you have, that no one may take your crown." 2 John 8: "Be careful that we do not lose what we have worked for. 2) The certainty of election and salvation depends on the certainty of perseverance in faith in Christ and in obedience to the commandments of God, Matt. 10:22; 19:17; but this perseverance in faith and good works ... Rom. 10:20; 1 Cor. 10:12; Rev. 3:11; 2 John 8. 3) This certainty, which we want, is nowhere taught in Scripture. **<AGtG 314>** 4) Scripture itself prevents us from being convinced of the certainty of salvation by those passages in which salvation is described as very difficult, Matt. 7:13:14; Acts 14:2; 1 Pet. 14:2; 1 Pet. 4:18.

"These reasons, which at first sight have a great appearance, we shall immediately refute completely, though briefly.

"1. I readily admit that the pious must work out their salvation with fear and trembling; but that it is to be inferred from this that they ought to doubt their salvation, I do not at all admit. And that everyone may see that this conclusion is rightly not admitted, I remind you that Scripture speaks of a twofold fear. One is a servile fear; it is a trembling which has its origin in the awareness that sin has not yet been forgiven and that there is a just judgment of God, and which is connected with flight from God and hatred of him. This fear, of course, is not found in the elect and can in no way exist with the assurance of salvation, Rom. 8:15. The other fear is purely (*mere*) filial. It is a fearful shyness to offend God and an earnest endeavor to avoid sin, combined with humility, conscientious care, love and invocation of God. This fear is proper to the pious (believers), Phil. 2:12; Prov. 1:7; Ps. 128:1, and has the immovable certainty of salvation as its companion. Listen to the Scriptures: 'Ye have not received the spirit of bondage, that ye should fear any more', Rom. 8:15; 'I will set shepherds over them to feed them, that they shall fear no more', Jer. 23:4; 'Fear not, little flock', Luc. 12:23. Bellarmin's objection that they need not fear, who are certain of their salvation, is of no importance at all; indeed, they do not need the urgent exhortations to piety and perseverance in faith and holy works, who are undoubtedly certain of their salvation. Fools! As Scripture teaches both, so both must be firmly believed. Paul is certain of his election, Rom. 8:28-39; 2 Tim. 1:12, and yet he worked out his salvation with single diligence, 1 Cor. 9:27. Nor is there anything to be said for Pistorius' objection that Paul did not set his example for others to imitate. That this is false is taught in 2 Cor. 1:21; 4:13; 1 Tim. 1:16.

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"2. The Spirit of God declares that a man can be sure of perseverance in faith and obedience. Hear Christ John 6:37: 'All that my Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. Hear Paul Phil 1:6: "He who began the good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Jesus Christ. And 1 Cor. 1:8-9: "Who also will keep you steadfast to the end, that you may be blameless until the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. For **<AGtG 315>** God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son JEsu Christ our Lord. Ebr. 13, 5: "I will not leave you nor forsake you". So that we may say, 'The Lord is my helper, what can a man do to me? Listen to 1 Peter 1:5: "By the power of God are we saved unto salvation through faith? It is also to be noted, as the passages quoted testify, that the certainty of our salvation is not based on our strength, but on the firm promise, powerful effect and faithful preservation of God. From this you can draw the certain conclusion that whoever is undoubtedly certain of his perseverance in faith and his salvation does not rely on a foolish judgment of human reason, but on the firm promises of God.

"3 We maintain that the certainty of salvation for which we pray is absolutely founded in Scripture. For although the Spirit of God does not say by name that you or I shall be saved, yet he unreservedly assures us that eternal life is given to all and everyone who believes in the Son, and that God is faithful, by whom we are called to the fellowship of his Son, who will keep us firm to the end, that we may be blameless until the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Cor. 1:8, 9, and that believers must be absolutely certain that whoever does not want to believe God, who firmly promises salvation to believers, accuses God of lying, 1 John 5:10.

"4 I am not about to admit that the way to eternal life is full of obstacles and not so easy to walk; but to deduce from this vague doubts about salvation is a more than free conclusion. For just as the Spirit of God, in the passages quoted, presents as great the difficulties that confront those who seek eternal life, so he also insistently inculcates the certainty of salvation and opposes all those difficulties with the power of Christ and the great strength of faith. Hear Christ Mark 9:23: 'All things are possible to him who believes'; John 16:*16*: 'Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world'. Hear Paul Rom 8:37: "But in all these things we overcome greatly because of him who loved us. Listen to John 1 John 5:4: "Our faith is the victory that has overcome the world. And thus we have saved the certainty of our election and salvation from the attacks of the

Papists and Arminians." (*Systema. Cap. III. Q. IX. p. 270 sq.*)

This beautiful passage contains a brief recapitulation of everything we have said so far.

Although a Christian can and should be certain of his salvation, one must not think that he is always inflamed with the joyful feeling of his election; the Christian does not always have such heroic certainty, indeed he very often loses it. Let us hear two important testimonies, on the one hand, that a Christian can be heroically certain of his salvation, and on the other hand, that he can also become weak.**<AGtG 316>**

Thus Ph. D. Burk writes: "A General Provost Master Wolf Georg von Schaplitz (died Sept. 4, 1625) has said: 'If only the Lord Jesus Christ had suffered for one man, I believe and am certain in my heart that I am that man. On this I live, on this I die, on this I am saved." (The Justification, considered by Ph. D. Burk. Stuttg. 1764. I, 610.)

But Chemnitz also writes. "Finally, we must add the reminder that we are not speaking of an ideal of certainty of faith, which in this weakness of the flesh would not be grasped by any doubt, which would feel nothing of wavering; just as if a weak and dull faith, which does not feel a perfect assurance and an absolute certainty, were not to be regarded as true faith. For we have shown in the foregoing that a weak faith, if it only grasps the true object, is a true faith. But, says one, why then is the doctrine of the assurance and certainty of faith taught in this weakness of the flesh? I answer, for two reasons: 1) That we may know that all that is felt by doubting and wavering does not belong to the nature of faith, but to those sayings: 'In my flesh dwells no good thing; to me, who desire good, evil clings.' Therefore believers do not boast of these stains of doubt before God, as if they were virtues of faith, but acknowledge that faith, in so far as it is a work and a virtue in us, is imperfect, and ask that those stains which are sprinkled on faith by the flesh may be covered and forgiven; and yet they have a certain and firm consolation for the sake of the object which faith grasps in that weakness. It is presented 2) so that we do not give way to doubts, but fight against the weakness of faith, so that we may always work our way up to certainty, so that we may not allow our confidence to be taken away, but rather that it may be strengthened, grow and increase. For

that is why God has provided the means of the Word, the sacraments and prayer in the exercises of faith. Indeed, that is why the Holy Spirit helps our weakness, so that faith may wriggle out, the glowing embers may not be extinguished, and faith in weakness itself may have a certain and firm consolation; as Paul says: "I have not so much grasped as I am grasped, I have not so much recognized as I am recognized". (op. *cit. fol. 173 b. 174 a.*)

If your faith does not grasp Christ, it can be as fervent as an oven, and you will go to hell with it; but if it grasps Christ, then no matter how weak your hand of faith may be, you have God's grace just as well as the hero of faith David, who was able to leap over the walls with his God. Nevertheless, it is a shortcoming of which we must be ashamed if we do not firmly believe, and we must always **<AGtG 317>** be in the ears of the good Lord that he does not want to extinguish the smoldering wick or break the bruised reed. It is therefore also a most dangerous way to preach that we should not be sure of our election and therefore of our salvation; for then we are forbidding what God wants and commanding what God punishes in his word. Doubt is truly no adornment of the Christian. . We preachers should indeed speak of the wavering of faith; but we should also always show that this is the dear flesh, and mark it as something evil, as filth of which believers should not boast, but be ashamed. For this reason, the certainty of faith is always and continually urged in the Church; not that we think: I can lead Christians to the point where they no longer feel any doubt in themselves; but I can bring them to the point where, when they are in doubt, they work their way up again and again from it to the joy of faith through God's grace.

## Thesis V. *)

*) Protocol of Pastor Hein.

"Since the Holy Spirit dwells in the elect who have believed, as in his temple, who is not idle in them, but impels the children of God to obedience to the commandments of God: In the same way, believers should not be idle, much less resist the promptings of the Spirit of God, but should practice all Christian virtues, godliness, modesty, temperance, patience, brotherly love, and make every effort to make their calling and election sure, so that the more they have the Spirit's power and strength within them, the less they will doubt it." (FC SD XI 72)

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The purpose of this thesis is to show that the doctrine of election by grace, and especially that believers can and should become sure of their election by grace, is by no means a resting-place for those who want to use the gospel to continue in their sin. It does not correspond at all to the true biblical doctrine of election to grace when someone concludes in this way: Well, if God from eternity has determined my destiny, has foreseen how it will turn out, it is foolishness for me to do anything to gain this destiny. Yes, this is what reason and the flesh say. But the Christian only has something to do with it insofar as he knows that this is the enemy he has to fight.

All Christian evangelical teachings aim to show Christians that they should do good, not by force, not out of fear, because they are commanded to do so, but voluntarily, with pleasure, just as a tree bears fruit without being told, because it is a fruitful tree. This is how the Christian should be. As soon as someone asks, "Where is it written that I must do this? Where is it written that I will go to hell if I do this? then he proves that he is not a Christian. A Christian does not ask whether something is commanded in the law if it is something pleasing to God and in accordance with love. He only asks whether the **<AGtG 318>** Spirit prompts and moves him to do something. So do not say that the doctrine of the election of grace is a resting place for the flesh. That is not true. Only a person who follows reason will make such a judgment. A believing elect is a person who has the Holy Spirit in him, therefore he cannot help but always do good, for the Holy Spirit is not an idle spirit, but must always be active, always working. As surely as the Holy Spirit is active in man when he dwells in him, so surely is the chosen one always active. He must do good, love God, love Christ, hate sin, live godly, he cannot do otherwise. Anyone who wants proof of this proves that he is not a Christian. A Christian curses the deeds he has done only because the law demands them. A false Christian does everything because he thinks: it is written this way, you have to do it, otherwise you will not go to heaven. The true Christian, on the other hand, knows when he has done something with only this intention: it is not written in God's book. These are plants that the Father has not planted. Everything must come from the free spirit. So let no one say that doctrine is useless because it does not produce a life rich in good works. These are blind Pharisees who speak thus. The greater the grace with which this teaching is dripping, the more glorious the fruit it produces. Whoever believes this teaching from the heart must become cheerful and joyful in all good works, doing good to his neighbor, forgiving his enemy and blessing him for the evil he does to him.

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Moreover, this doctrine of election by grace also has this great benefit, that a Christian must be zealous in good works in order to become certain that he himself is an elect person. Whoever has to say to himself: You call yourself a Christian, but you love money and not Christ; you love the world and its pleasures and vanities and not the goods of grace; you evidently love sin and are not afraid of God's wrath, to him we also say: Stop your chatter, you are not an elect person. The devil has chosen you for hell. Every man's conscience tells him that this is so. Therefore, if a man wants to be sure that he is an elect, he must make his election sure by good works. Not that his election may be established with God, for that is firm enough, but with himself, so that he cannot say without contradiction from his conscience: God has provided for me. For as soon as a man allows sin to rule over him, his conscience speaks: You are not the elect, your part is with the devil, who is the king of sin. But when someone sees that by God's grace you now have a desire for His Word, that sin is an abomination to you, that the world with its vanity disgusts you, that you are ready to give up your temporal goods for Christ if He demands it, if it serves His glory, then his heart says: this is proof that you are no longer a man, as he is when he is born. This is what God's spirit of grace has wrought in you. In this way a person becomes more and more certain that he is an elect person.

Luther writes about this: "Although the calling and election is strong enough in itself, it is not strong and firm in you because you are not yet certain that it concerns you." **<AGtG 319>**

Once God has decided to save someone, he will be saved. That is certain, as firm as the mountains of God on earth. But I am still doubtful whether the good Lord has destined me for this, and I am becoming more and more certain of this by doing good works. Oh, what a delicious stimulus to good works this is! Who can doubt that this is a delicious teaching that leads not to safety but to godliness? For if you have no desire to deny yourself, to give up all for Christ, to live for Him alone, to die for Him, you lack an important testimony that you are chosen. Good works make our election firm. But this does not mean to be firm if I imagine it, but it means to be firm if I have an irrefutable foundation under my feet. So when I see that God has done this, that flesh and blood cannot do this, I have become another man. Now I can deny what I could not deny before. My inner being tells me: this is the work of the Holy Spirit; he has begun it. Therefore I will follow him with joy and rejoicing and trample my flesh underfoot.

"This is why St. Peter wants us to establish our calling

and election with good works. This is what St. Peter means, that faith should not be allowed to rest and lie quietly, because it is so skillful that it becomes stronger and stronger by activity and by the way, until it becomes certain of its calling and election and cannot fail."

If someone is now a young Christian, he firmly believes that God has forgiven his sins; but if you ask him: how is it, will you remain? he will answer: I don't know, I have no certainty. The rule, at least, is that young Christians are uncertain about this. Then God leads them into temptation and trial, and when they have passed, they can say: so far God has helped me through everything, I will reach the end of faith, the salvation of souls.

[Luther again:]

"And here a goal is also set as to how one should deal with the temptation. There are many frivolous spirits who have not felt much about faith, who fall in, bump up against it and worry about this thing for the first time *) [*) *a priori*] and want to find out through reason whether they are provided for, so that they can be sure of what they are."

They want to finish with their soul's bliss quickly, want to settle it quickly so that they can then remain in peace. God does not want to make people certain so that they can say: I will not trouble myself with worries. No, God wants people to be troubled with worries until they die.

[Luther again:]

"Only abstain from it soon; it is not the right thing to do. But if you want to become certain, you must come to it by the way that St. Peter proposes to you here."

That is: make your election sure by good works. You who are attached to earthly goods, give generously and ask God that you may do so with joy. You who cling to your honor, let yourself be laughed at. Thou that seekest thy heaven in pleasures, avoid them, and taste gladly the bitter cup of affliction. The more you learn this, the more certain you can be that you are the chosen one. **<AGtG 320>** But if you return to the world, if you become a miser, an ambitious, vain, pleasure-seeking person who, where there is pleasure, is only quick at hand, you have a sign that you are not the chosen one. The more seriously we take our lives, the more certain we become that we are chosen. Therefore, this teaching is not at all against godliness, but is the most precious means of planting true godliness.

"If you take another before you, you have already failed; your own experience must teach you."

We feel the truth of these words. For when is one most joyful at the thought of the election of grace? When he is most zealous in Christianity. But if one becomes lukewarm and sluggish, then the joyful certainty is gone. That is the natural consequence.

> [Finally, Luther once more:] "If faith is well exercised and practiced, you will finally be sure of the things that you do not lack." (Interpretation of the 2nd epistle of St. Peter on 1:10. IX, 846 f.)

Of course, in many cases this does not happen so quickly. God gives it to some right away. As soon as they come out of their miserable worldly condition, they become joyful, that they would take a thousand oaths, they go to heaven; but many must first pass through much hardship and temptation before they become so joyful and certain.

Now one might think: if it is the case that I am to make my calling and election firm through good works, then ultimately everything depends on my good works. But this is a terrible error. It is decisively rejected in our

Formula of Concord, where it says: "Therefore we reject the following errors ... that not only the mercy of God and the most holy merit of Christ, but also in us is a cause of God's election, for the sake of which God has chosen us to eternal life. Which are all blasphemous and frightful erroneous doctrines, whereby Christians are deprived of all comfort which they have in the holy Gospel and the use of the holy Sacraments, and for this reason should not be tolerated in the Church of God." (Epitome. Art. XI. p. 557.)

This is an extremely important passage in our confession. Our church rejects and condemns those who teach that not only God's grace in Christ is the reason for our election, but that there must also be a cause for it in man; if it is not in man, he could not have elected him. This is the general teaching of our time. The newer theologians who call themselves "Lutheran" and "believers" teach, with the exception of very few, that faith is man's own act, and they say this because it ultimately depends on man's decision as to whether he will be saved. This pleases our unbelieving world immensely. It thinks that what these people say about faith is stupid stuff; God asks nothing about what a person believes; but it **<AGtG 321>** is at least reasonable for them to say that it all depends on a person's decision whether he is saved or damned. That is frightening! Others, however, say: It depends on man's behavior. This is reproached in our doctrine, that we deny that it depends on man's behavior whether he is chosen. But this is an appalling error, which should make a Lutheran's skin crawl, for it deprives Jesus Christ, who has redeemed us so dearly,

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of the honor that is due to him alone. There is no joking to be done here. That is why we should trample such talk underfoot. It is horrible! On me, who am a wretched worm of sin, is it to depend whether I have eternal life, whether I will be eternally saved, whether I will be eternally united with God! No, such great things never hang on a miserable human hair! They hang on other greater ropes; these are the ropes of God's eternal love and the redeeming love of the Son of God. On this alone! Therefore we condemn the talk: It depends on man's behavior; man must decide; it depends on his decision whether he is saved or damned. Reason says: How can it be otherwise? Are you great? Yes, we are so great and say: No, it is not this wretched filth on which I stand when I ask: will I be saved? but Christ and His blood.

In me and my life
Is nothing on this earth,
What Christ has given me,
That is worthy of love.

If I have not done something right,
I am heartily sorry.
But then I accept
Christ's death and pain:
For this is the judgment
Of my misdeeds;
I bring this before God's throne,
It was well advised for me.

It is not my decision that makes me blessed, but that God has decided for me and therefore also decided for me, has worked faith in me. That is why I am saved and remain saved. All those who doubt this are synergists, i.e. people who say that man must also help; who do not want to overburden Christ alone. But Christ thanks Himself for letting Himself be harnessed to a chariot with such a rag, **<AGtG 322>** so that the sinner could then say: If I had not helped, would you not have come this far with me? and the Lord would have to answer him: Yes, you have accomplished this, now you can praise yourself for eternity. But it is written that the blessed take their crowns and cast them at Christ's feet, saying, "To you, Lord, belongs the crown; I am unworthy of it. But Christ says: I have enough crowns, just put them on again. I crown my own work in you. If you want to crown your own, the devil will put a crown on your head made of pitch and brimstone. There is no jesting where Christ has shed his divine blood. Should we now want to sit next to him on his throne? No, he

then pushes us down. He says: I tread the winepress alone, and whoever wants to tread it with me will be crushed by me.

The reason why the Formula of Concord bears this witness is that Melanchthon introduced this error.

In his "Apology of the Formula of Concord", Hutter makes a whole register of heresies that Melanchthon taught in his writings and writes, among other things: "He (Melanchthon) places election not only in the will and mercy of God, but partly in the will of man. For he writes explicitly: 'In man is and must be a cause why some are chosen to salvation and others are rejected and damned.'"

If Melanchthon had only said: The cause must lie in man that he is condemned, then he would be right. But the cause of salvation lies in God alone. Oh, that is an important distinction that everyone must remember. For this confuses so many people that they say: Is it not man's fault if he goes to hell? You must also admit that everything depends on a person's behavior as to whether he will be saved. Then you must answer: According to Scripture, the cause of salvation lies in God alone. For it says: "It is God who works in you both to will and to do, according to his good pleasure. So then it is not a matter of anyone's willing or doing, but of God's mercy." I agree with your decision that there is also a cause for salvation in man.

Hutter again [quotes Melanchthon]:

> "Since the promise is universal and there are no contradictory wills in God, there must be a cause of difference in us why a Saul is rejected and a David accepted, that is, there must be a different action in these two. So read the article on free will." —

It is always said: it must be so, instead of saying: Thus it is written. But this is not to be found, so the followers of this false doctrine must reason; and he who is not careful is easily caught. Therefore, if someone makes a conclusion, we must say: Show me where it is written in the Bible; if he cannot show this, we have nothing to do with him. We base our salvation on the Scriptures alone. Otherwise it might turn out that our reasoning has brought us to hell. **<AGtG 323>**

[Hutter once more:] "The following assertions (*emblemata*) of Melanchthon are in direct conflict with the orthodox doctrine of Free Will: 'That in us is the cause why some assent to the promise of grace and others do not'. (*Concordia Concors, p. 345*) Therefore the Brunswick theologians,

including Chemnitz, give the following advice in a letter of August 9, 1576: "In the article on predestination it would also be good for this point to be mentioned along with others, since some teach that *causa electionis* [the cause of election] is not only God's mercy, but that there is also a cause of election in man himself." (op. cit. p. 405 f.)

In the first draft of the Formula of Concord the passage just quoted is missing. It was added at the instigation of the aforementioned theologians. Praise God that this has happened! Otherwise, if we were to utter these words now, we would fight against them with all our might. It would be said: that's enthusiastic. But praise God, our God also knew this in advance, he provided for his dear Lutheran Church. This is a great comfort to us. But we must also adhere to it and seek to recognize how right these words are according to Scripture.

Gerhard: "One replies: 'If the cause of reprobation is in man, then of course the cause of election will also be in him. The latter is false. So also the former. I answer: 1.) There is a difference between what is being compared here. Unbelief and impenitence to the end, for the sake of which men are rejected and damned by God, are the deserving, proper and complete (*adaequatae*) causes of that rejection and damnation; they spring from the guilt of our corrupt nature and from the impulse of the devil; nothing works the Father, nothing the Son, nothing the Holy Spirit; but the salutary conversion to God and faith, by which we become partakers of the merit of Christ unto eternal life, and in respect of which election has taken place, is not a meritorious cause, neither of election, nor of eternal blessedness, nor does it spring from the powers of free will, but it is a work of God."

Do not think, if you are convinced that you are an elect person: I am better than others; I have also done many a good deed; now I am no longer surprised that God has chosen me. No, fall on your knees and say: Oh, my Lord and God, many are called, but few are chosen, and am I one of the few? How can I, a sinner, believe this? But because You say so, I cannot make You a liar. Let it be so in our hearts. **<AGtG 324>**

Gerhard continues:

"2. therefore Scripture ascribes the election of men to life entirely to God; for on no other cause (principle) does this supreme work of divine grace depend than on God and his eternal counsel, which is founded in Christ and

regulated (*ordinatum*) by a *mediorum* τάξει; the cause of reprobation, on the other hand, the same Scripture places in men themselves." (*Loc. de elect. § 188.*)

Seb. Schmidt: It is to be noted "that the word eternal life or eternal blessedness (2 Thess. 2:13.) is not to be taken here so narrowly as to express the mere introduction into eternal life, but that it is to be taken in a certain wider sense, so that it includes perseverance to the end. To be sure, man perseveres in faith, that is, he makes use of the new powers of faith duly and according to the divine order, intending the act of perseverance; but without the assistance of God to support his weakness he cannot accomplish it. And this assistance is the gift of perseverance, which we have called the effect of predestination included in the word salvation; because, when it is given, the salvation of man is also given." (*Artic. Form. Conc. Repetitio, p. 519.*)

Perseverance, then, is the fruit of God's assistance to the elect. Thus our salvation is taken entirely out of our hands and placed in the hands of Jesus Christ, as our confession says. Whoever finds this too honorable may see how he gets to heaven. Christ wants to take our salvation into His hands, so we give it to Him. And he also makes us blessed, for he does not ask about our worthiness any more than the Father does. On the contrary, he looks around for those who say: "I have nothing but the guilt of sin, how shall I appear before you? Then Christ says: You are the right man, I will have beggars. We see this in the Gospel. Tax collectors and sinners came. The Pharisees said, 'This is a beautiful Savior; we do not want such a one! But poor tax collectors and sinners, thieves and adulterers were saved. Whoever does not like this should stay away from Christianity! But this is the teaching that Christ brings poor sinners, who belong in hell, to heaven. He does not change his gospel, it cost him too much, he sticks to it, and praise God, we stick to it too.

Schmidt thus calls perseverance an effect of predestination, not the cause. For if perseverance were the cause of predestination, one would have to assume that the reason lies in man, in his behavior. For man has his part in perseverance. As soon as one is converted, he must cooperate. But our confession says: Man has no part in the causation of salvation: therefore perseverance cannot be a cause of it. This is very important.

The following testimonies confirm all this. **<AGtG 325>**

Wittenberg theological faculty of the year 1597:

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"Accordingly, it is further rejected by us as false and ungodly if anyone should say or teach that believers choose God by faith before He chooses them, and give Him cause to choose them afterward. Which Dr. Huber, with unfathomable unjustification, blames on us Wittenbergers, and is neither afraid nor ashamed nor permitted to place the status or main controversy on it, on this stands our whole reason p. 69."

Huber thus claimed that the Lutherans taught that man must first choose God, then God chooses him. These theologians protested against this. For one could prove the opposite from Scripture, namely that God first chooses man, and then man chooses God by the power of God's grace.

> "Even though faith itself originally comes from God's eternal election, and is not worked in us by us, but solely by God's power." (Conf. of the eternal election. *Consil. Witteberg*. I, 616.)

Someone might say that it is written in Scripture and in the Catechism that good works are necessary if one is justified. Then replies

C. Dietrich: "But are they (good works) not necessary for the preservation of righteousness and salvation? Not even that; for we are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. 1 Pet. 1, 5. Phil. 1, 6." (Small Catechism Question 148.)

So do not misuse this passage 2 Peter 1:10: "Wherefore, brethren, take all the more diligence to make your calling and election sure." This does not mean that we thereby establish that God has chosen us, but that we thereby establish in our hearts that God has done so, for God has chosen us eternally before our works. He does not ask anything about our works, but we should ask about them and conclude from them if we have a desire to do good works: God has chosen me, for he is at work in me.

Thus the following exquisite words of our Luther may conclude our discussions: "We must run and will; yet it is not because of running and willing, but because of God's mercy, Rom. 9. We must be conscious of nothing; and yet also know that we are not justified because of it, Rom. 6. 1 Cor. 4. We must seek eternal life through patience in good works, Rom. 2; yet it is not because of our striving, but because of God's mercy."

For God does not ask about our works unless we do them to thank God. As soon as a person wants to earn something with good works, he does nothing but evil and damnable works. But when a Christian says: God has given me everything, everything, has left me nothing left to do to be saved, I would like to

do something to love him, God says: You are doing right, my son. These are good works if you expect nothing in return and think: I need nothing, Christ has given me everything. Because He has given everything, my works are nothing but **<AGtG 326>** thanksgiving. So we should not do good works in order to earn our election, but so that we may all the more joyfully embrace the eternal election as our own.

> "Finally, one must also complete the course and have the crown of righteousness added, 2 Tim. 4; yet it is not a matter of completing or having, but of God's mercy." (Five Disputations on Rom. 3, 28. from the year 1535. Disp. V. XIX, 1769 f.)

Let us remember this. Let us remember that we are fighting a good fight; let us remember that we are finishing the race; let us remember that we are keeping the faith, and yet say: My dear God, but we know that all this does not do it, you must finish it. Then God is so kind and calls out to us when we come: "O faithful and true servant, you have been faithful over a few things, I will set you over many things; enter into the joy of your Lord." Alas, the faithful Lord plays with his poor children and says, "You faithful servant," when he should say, "You unfaithful servant," but his grace finds nothing but faithfulness. Then he will say: Come here, you poor sinner, I will crown you, even though I myself have triumphed in you. Only then will we know what the election of grace is. Now we only have a very small glimmer of this glory. Then the sun of grace will rise and shine on us eternally, so that we can rejoice forever and sing hallelujah over the eternal grace of our God against us lost sinners!

19 [1880 Western District Convention essay by Walther] ^
<AGtG 327> [page numbers from *All Glory to God* book.]

# Doctrinal Proceedings.

Since several theses in our last two Synod Reports, especially in the one from the previous year (1879), had met with opposition within the Synodical Conference, the District felt compelled to refrain from the topic still at hand this year as well, and to once again discuss the doctrine of election by grace, namely with regard to the objections raised. Although only four morning sessions could be devoted to these discussions due to the amount of business at hand, the District not only unanimously recognized the nullity of the objections raised during this time with thanksgiving to God, but also strengthened and founded itself on God's Word and the confession of the truth once recognized. This time, too, the discussions were conducted on the basis of theses presented by the speaker, Dr. Walther, which unfortunately could not be fully discussed due to a lack of time. These are as follows:

## Theses concerning the doctrine of election by grace.

Thesis I.

The doctrine that election by grace is the cause of the salvation of the elect and all that belongs to it (a), and that the mercy of God and the most holy merit of Christ alone, and nothing that God foreknew in man, is the cause of election by grace (b), is not the Calvinist (c), but the pure Lutheran doctrine, which our Evangelical Lutheran Church publicly confessed as its own 300 years ago and laid down for all time in the Formula of Concord on the basis of Holy Scripture; therefore those who reject this doctrine cannot be regarded as Lutherans faithful to this point.

a. Formula of Concord, page 554. § 5. 705 f. § 8. [FC Ep XI 5; FC SD XI 8]
b. C.-F. 557. § 20. 723. § 87. 88. 713 f. § 43. [FC Ep XI 20; FC SD XI 42, 87-88]
c. C.-F. 557. § 21. [FC Ep XI 21]

Thesis II.

Nor is this the doctrine of an election of grace in a broader, but in its proper sense.

C.-F. 706. § 9. 708. § 24. Cf. 707. § 15-23. [FC SD XI 9, 24; cf. pars. 15-23]

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Thesis III.

Those who wish to remove the offense which reason takes at this doctrine can do so only by either making what God has seen in man the cause of his election, as the Synergists do, and thus falsifying the Lutheran doctrine of free will and **<AGtG 328>** conversion (a), or by making God the cause of reprobation, as Calvin does, and thus overturning the Lutheran doctrine of God's holiness and common grace (b).

a. C.-F. 588 f. § 3. 5. 594. § 23. 25. 598. § 40-42. 609. § 87. 606 f. § 75-78. [FC SD II 3, 5, 23, 25, 40-42, 75-78, 87]

b. C.-F. 557. § 17-19. [FC Ep XI 17-19]

Thesis IV.

This doctrine of election of grace does not obscure or weaken the doctrine of justification and salvation by faith alone, but rather brightens and confirms it.

C.-F. 713 f. § 43. [FC SD XI 43]

Thesis V.

Only misunderstanding and abuse of this doctrine leads to despair and certainty (a), but with right understanding and use it is just as comforting against despair (b) as it is awakening against certainty (c).

a. C.-F. 724. § 91. 92. 706. § 9-11. [FC SD XI 9-11 91-92]

b. C.-F. 713 f. § 43-50. 723. § 89. 90. 711. § 33. [FC SD XI 33, 43-50, 89-90]

c. C.-F. 715 ff. § 51-72. [FC SD XI 51-72]

Thesis VI.

The certainty of election which a Christian should and can have (a) is a certainty of faith based on the universality of the promises of grace, on the calling through the Word, on the holy sacraments, and on private absolution (b).

a. C.-F. 709. § 25. 719 f. § 73. 74. 724. § 90. 714. § 45-47. [FC SD XI 25, 45-47, 73-74, 90]

b. C.-F. 709 et seq. § 26-38. [FC SD XI 26-38]

It has been remarked that there are three classes of opponents of the right doctrine of election of grace. The first class consists of those who say that the doctrine of election by grace has nothing to do with us Lutherans; rather, it is exclusively a doctrine of the Reformed. And unfortunately it is the case that the vast majority of those who have come to America from Germany, and certainly many who have long since become naturalized here, have never

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heard of election by grace. They think that one must be most fearful of this doctrine, for many thousands have already fallen into great distress of soul, yes, into despair or into dreadful security through it; it is therefore best not to speak of it at all. But this is a great error.

There is a doctrine of election by grace, or predestination, which is clearly taught in Holy Scripture; it not only hints at it here and there, but treats of it, as the scholars say, *ex professo*, that is, with the intention of thoroughly expounding it. The second half of the 8th chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans, as well as chapters 9-11, deal with nothing more than the election of grace; similarly, Ephesians 1 discusses it in all its aspects. How often, moreover, does the Savior speak of the elect! He concludes two of His parables with the words: "For many are called, but few are chosen." And when he speaks of the last times, of the dangers and temptations, of the terrible tribulations to which **<AGtG 329>** Christians would be exposed in them, of the false prophets who would perform great signs and wonders in them in order, where possible, to deceive even the elect, he again reveals to us that these days will be shortened for the sake of the elect. If there were no longer any elect at that time, God would allow these terrible temptations, trials and tribulations to continue until the last day, for then no one would be saved. But the elect shall be saved: therefore God has the days shortened, lest they also be deceived. For of course, if God did not protect his elect, then according to Scripture they too would be deceived. But this is part of the election of grace, that God has decided to bring me to faith and to keep me in it to the end.

Furthermore, how often does the Savior speak of the election of grace to his disciples! He says: "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you"; and again: "If you were of the world, the world would love you; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." And when he describes the Last Day, he also describes how the angels will gather the elect from the four winds of the earth before his judgment seat.

How often, therefore, do the holy apostles speak of election by grace! how often do they comfort the Christians who were then in great distress with this very teaching! You know that you have been chosen from the beginning of the world, says the apostle. It is therefore quite foolish to reproach us for ever having spoken of election by grace

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For the salvation of our souls, we preachers are obliged to proclaim the whole counsel of God concerning salvation in Christ; now this doctrine is clearly stated in Holy Scripture; therefore we would be unfaithful men, traitors to souls, if we did not also want to expound this comforting and blessed doctrine to the children of God. Therefore, do not be offended by the fact that things have been so peaceful in our synod up to now, and now a dispute has arisen over this doctrine! But what kind of peace would that have been if we had not discussed it. But what kind of peace would that have been if we had not spoken of a saving doctrine? That would be a churchyard peace, and not the peace that Christ came into the world to bring. He has indeed told us that he brings us the peace which the world cannot give: but he also says: "I have not come to send peace on earth, but a sword," namely, strife and contention, hatred and persecution.

Therefore let us not be grieved that strife has come! The disunity that has arisen is a blessed disunity, for it is nothing other than the fulfillment of Christ's prophecy of what will happen when the truth is truly proclaimed.

The second class of opponents consists of those who say: "We admit that the election of grace is taught in the Bible, and therefore we cannot reproach our pastors for having once addressed this doctrine; but we should not have made it so important. Indeed, we are even accused that the Missouri Synod now places this doctrine above all other teachings of Scripture. In the past, the doctrine of justification had always been promoted as the main doctrine, but now it takes a back seat. **<AGtG 330>**

But do not be misled by such talk! In the first place, the doctrine of justification is confirmed and placed in the right light precisely by the correct presentation of the doctrine of election by grace, as we shall see; and secondly, what can we do about the fact that we had to deal with election by grace for the second time? We would gladly have been satisfied once! But no sooner had we raised our voice than we found opposition, and that in our own midst. That is why we had to discuss the matter in more detail a year ago. But the opposition grew louder and louder, and so, driven by necessity, we had to decide to deal with this doctrine again this year. But we did not do so because we believed it to be the main doctrine of our church; oh no! we believe with all our hearts that the main doctrine is the doctrine of the order of grace. We have also proved this; no one can deny it to us. We have always had the doctrine of

election by grace, as we have it now; it is an abominable falsehood to say that it is a new doctrine that has now arisen. We have only not practiced it as often as we do now, so that we would not make our dear Christians one-sided, and because the main thing for us has always been the doctrine of justification. And so, with God's help, it shall remain among us in the future; justification will be the sun that shines before us on our path; it will remain the golden thread that runs through all our sermons. But when opponents attack a doctrine, then of course we must defend ourselves, then we must stand up for God's Word and God's honor. Then it always looks as if the doctrine under attack is the main thing, but there is no other way.

If people are locked in a castle that is under siege and the enemy breaks through the wall at one point, would that be a good general saying: I have to defend the whole castle, so I must not put more soldiers at the gap than at the rest of the wall? Certainly not! On the contrary, he will throw all his might into the place where the opening has been made, for that is where the danger threatens. So it is now within our synod. Until now we have had peace and quiet, no one has attacked our doctrine. Then suddenly the enemy wants to make a breach in the wall of our confession by attacking our doctrine of election by grace. That's why we are now confronting this gap with all our might, because we know that if the devil breaks into the church to rob it of one doctrine, he will destroy the whole castle. In any case, the doctrines of our faith are so closely interrelated that it is impossible for anyone to attack one doctrine without also attacking the others.

Finally, the third class of opponents consists of those who admit that Scripture has a doctrine of the election of grace, and that it is also very important to teach it; but who say that the way we present it is not Lutheran, but Calvinistic. Indeed, they accuse us of being crypto-Calvinists, that is, secret Calvinists who know full well that they are not Lutheran, but who, under the appearance of Lutheranism, secretly smuggle in Calvinist doctrine in order to deceive people.

Well then, we must defend ourselves against these attacks. It is precisely our District that needs to take over this defense, for we have — we will gladly admit — kindled the fire. Let us at least make sure that this fire does not consume our house, but that it becomes a fire of which the Lord says that it is already burning. **<AGtG 331>**

24 [1880 Western District Convention essay by Walther]

## Thesis I.

The doctrine that election by grace is a cause of the salvation of the elect and all that pertains to it (a), and that the mercy of God and the most holy merit of Christ alone, and nothing that God foreknew in man, is the cause of election by grace (b), is not the Calvinist (c), but the pure Lutheran doctrine, which our Evangelical Lutheran Church publicly confessed as its own 300 years ago and laid down for all time in the Formula of Concord on the basis of Holy Scripture; therefore those who reject this doctrine cannot be regarded as Lutherans faithful to the confession in this respect. (FC Ep XI 5; FC SD XI 8; FC Ep XI 20; FC SD XI 42, 87-88; FC Ep XI 21)

a. Formula of Concord, page 554. § 5. 705 f. § 8.
b. C.-F. 557. § 20. 723. § 87. 88. 713 f. § 43.
c. C.-F. 557. § 21.

We go about our work not merely for the purpose of refuting opponents, but above all for the sake of our own salvation; for this is the reason why the doctrine of election of grace is given to us. For every true Christian rejoices inexpressibly that he knows he has a gracious God and already possesses salvation. But now he would also like to know: Will I also attain salvation one day? Will I also retain the grace of God? Will I not fall away again? For he knows that many have started out well, but have turned back, lost grace again and finally gone to hell. So what good is it for a Christian if he knows nothing more than this? Now you are in grace, but in one year you may have lost everything again, and once you die, you must sink into eternal death, and then your present state of grace will only increase your damnation? No, a true Christian desires to know with all his heart: Can I be sure that I will really be saved one day? If he could not, he would be like a prisoner sitting in a dungeon waiting to be led to prison, still hoping for pardon, but always hovering between fear and hope. No matter how delicious the food and drink served to such a condemned person, no matter how many comforts are prepared for him — if he does not know that he has been pardoned forever, he will always lie there in fear and terror. As often as the dungeon door opens, he must think: Now I will probably be led to the place of execution. But this is not how the faithful Savior has provided for his Christians. Rather, he says: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and **no one**

will snatch them out of my hand." And Paul cries out triumphantly: "Who will separate us from the love of God?" by which he obviously means: nothing, in heaven, on earth or in hell. Every Christian should and can attain this certainty. This is not to say that he who does not have this certainty is not a Christian; but only that he still lacks an important means to a truly joyful Christianity.

The first thesis now immediately rests against those who accuse us of being Calvinists. **<AGtG 332>**

But what is Calvin's teaching? He taught the following: God had decided to reveal his glory, and for this purpose he had created the world, which is correct. But Calvin went on to teach that in order to reveal his love, God had from eternity chosen certain people for salvation, and that they should and must be saved at all costs, under all circumstances. He wants to bring them to faith through an irresistible grace, so that no matter how much they resist, He will still force them to believe, and will also keep them in the faith by giving them an unlosable grace. Furthermore, God has decided to let all people fall into sin; He has not only allowed this, but has decided it. For if he was to reveal his love to the elect, he first had to plunge them into a truly miserable, horrible state in order to save these shameful creatures. At the same time, however, God also wanted to reveal his righteousness and holiness; and for this purpose He compelled people to sin. He therefore sent the devil into paradise to deceive them and withdrew his grace from them so that they would surely fall. At the same time, he also decided to create the vast majority of people so that they would be damned and come to eternal torment. He did not want to redeem them, nor did he want to give them faith. Of course, God must have the gospel preached throughout the whole world, otherwise his elect would not hear it: but those who are not elect are not meant by the gospel; God does not call them seriously, he does not offer them his grace; for he has once decided that they should and must be damned. This is the shameful teaching of Calvin; we teach the exact opposite of all this.

We teach according to Holy Scripture that God wills that all men be helped, that He has loved the whole world from eternity and has given it His Son Jesus Christ as Savior. We teach with all our heart that Christ has redeemed all men, indeed, that there is not a man in the whole world whose sin Christ has not borne and atoned for. We teach that God earnestly calls every man to whom the gospel is preached, and that God will certainly save him if he does not willfully and obstinately resist; that

God intends to bring every man to faith and to keep him in it. There is no man who could say: Yes, perhaps I am not chosen; therefore what does it help me that I hear the sermon? Whoever speaks in this way is speaking the devil's words, for the power to believe lies in the Word. Therefore to whomsoever the Word is preached, God also extends his grace and eternal life. If therefore you perish, do not accuse God, but cry out against yourself. So no one who is concerned about his salvation needs to say: Yes, but perhaps I am not chosen after all. This very one should speak: This is a proof that God wants me to believe that I am chosen, because he has given me his gospel and I would like to believe. For this desire to believe is already an effect of the Holy Spirit. So I should not speak: Yes, I should, I may, perhaps I can't believe at all? No, you should, you may, you can believe; for the grace and the Spirit that work faith are in the word, and you have that. This is our doctrine; and this doctrine Calvin curses and condemns as a hideous, false doctrine, which strives against God's honor.

How shameful is it, therefore, when we are accused of Calvinism? But we must also become accustomed to being called false teachers. It was no different for the apostles. No sooner had Paul preached the gospel to the Galatians than the false prophets came and called him a false teacher, and the churches fell away from him again. Only with many tears **<AGtG 333>** was he able to restore a number of them. If we want to be true, apostolic Christians, we must be treated in the same way, we must also be denounced as false teachers. That is a seal on our faith, and it would be sad for us if it were otherwise.

But why are we accused of Calvinism? Mainly for two reasons: First, because we teach that the election of grace is a cause of our salvation. Election by grace is considered to be nothing other than the order of grace, and we say that if a person submits to the order of grace, then God says behind it: you have done what you ought to do, therefore you shall be saved. Of course, the election of grace is not the cause of our salvation, but only the seal that a person has accepted salvation; he has it and should now have it. The second reason is: because we teach that the cause of election to grace is only twofold, namely, the mercy of God and the most holy merit of Christ. But is there a third reason? Let every Christian ask himself whether he has done anything to come to faith and remain in it, or whether it is not God's mercy alone, God's work alone? Will he not say: I have often prayed, fought, wept on my knees

before God because of my sin, have often lain in the dust before him like a poor worm; but I must say this: if I have done this, it has always been the good God who has driven me to it! I would have fallen away again long ago and jumped into the abyss of sin if the good Lord had not kept me. Yes, we need not speak: I had long deserved that God should have asked nothing more of me; he has washed me clean from the dunghill of sin by the blood of Christ, and behold! I allowed myself to be tempted by sin again, returned to the world and allowed myself to be blinded by the devil; but the good Lord knocked on my door again, sent me faithful counselors, dear Christians, gave me good books and reminded me of my former blessed state, and then I felt something that I could not explain, a secret knocking in my heart, and then I became so fearful, whereas before I walked along so safely and carefree. Where did this mysterious force come from that pulled me out of the mud of sin? It was solely the mercy of my God in Christ Jesus.

This is the point on which everything depends, and even simple-minded Christians who are not theologians recognize this. Let us say that God has done everything for us and that there is nothing but sin and shame on our side if we confess the doctrine of election by grace. Truly, if we lacked this confession, our church would lack the main thing. If that confession were Calvinism, then the main thing would be with the Calvinists.

This is a doctrine of the devil that Calvin gives to the good Lord by teaching that he has, as it were, reached into a pot, and now he has thrown those who are to be saved into one box, and those who are to be damned into the other box. But with this we give all true honor to the dear God, that we teach that God really wants to save all men without exception, and saves those who believe in Christ Jesus, and that it is he alone who produces this faith in the elect or, if the light of faith is extinguished, rekindles it. **<AGtG 334>**

The Formula of Concord teaches in clear words that the election of grace is the cause of our salvation. It is as if, three hundred years after the publication of the Book of Concord, the good Lord wanted to prove through us what a great blessing it is that our Lutheran Church has the Book of Concord. For since we have been attacked for being Calvinists, we must of course prove that we are Lutherans. How do we prove this? If we go to the Bible, we are told: Yes, you are distorting the book; we can therefore do nothing else but go to the Book of Concord. For there the Lutheran church has laid down what its faith is. Miraculously,

however, the authors of the Formula of Concord, the 11th article of which deals with the election of grace, wrote it mainly for the sake of descendants, as they themselves say in the introduction.

In the *Epitome*, the first part of the Formula of Concord, it says (Müller p. 554. § 4., St. Louis edition p. 379): "But the predestination or eternal election of God is only for the pious, well-pleasing children of God, which is a cause of their salvation, which he also creates, and what belongs to it, decrees, on which our salvation is so firmly founded that they cannot overcome the gates of hell."

Here it is clearly stated that the election of grace is not merely the order of salvation, but a cause of our salvation; indeed, that it also creates everything that belongs to it, and decrees all this. Here, of course, we are not talking about salvation insofar as it is acquired, but insofar as I am to receive it; for redemption comes first, through which salvation is acquired for us. Christ has acquired righteousness and eternal life for all people through his suffering and death. But if I know that salvation has been acquired for me, the second question for me is whether I will receive it. After all, many things are acquired, indeed, offered and given to men by God, and yet they do not receive them. Then the Holy Scriptures answer me: You will have salvation too. For there is not only a plan of salvation and sanctification, but also a plan of election. Election is the cause of your attaining salvation, for it also causes everything by which you are led to salvation. This is stated even more clearly in the *Solid Declaration*, the second part of the Formula of Concord. There it says (M. p. 705. f. § 8.; St. L. edition p. 478. f.): "But the eternal election of God not only sees and knows beforehand the salvation of the elect, but is also a cause of the gracious will and good pleasure of God in Christ Jesus, so that our salvation, and that which belongs to it, creates, works, helps, and promotes; on which also our salvation is founded, so that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; as it is written, 'My sheep shall no man pluck out of my hand'; and again: 'And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed'."

Hereby the Formula of Concord testifies to us: Since Christ has redeemed us, we certainly know that there is a way in which God wants to save all people; for we are taught: "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved." But the further question is: Will I really receive the end of faith according to the Scriptures? God has made provision for this too; for he has chosen us, that is, he has made a decree that he wants to bring us safely to heaven, **<AGtG 335>**

but certainly by no other way than that by which he wants to bring all men to salvation. He did not make a distinction and say: These shall go to heaven and not the others; but he said: I want all men to go to heaven; therefore I will send my Son to die for all, I will call all without exception through the gospel and will knock on all hearts with my Holy Spirit through the gospel. But God knows in advance that all this will be in vain for many, and because of their willful and stubborn resistance, which he foresaw, he has decided to condemn them. However, he does not say to the elect: I know you will be and remain good people, and therefore I decide to save you. For, first of all, it is wrong that we should be and remain good; but even if one says: God foreknew who would believe, and therefore God chose him, this is also wrong, for this is not election by grace, but the order of grace. No, God has chosen the elect to bring them to faith, and if they fall away, to lead them back to repentance and keep them in faith to the end; their salvation is therefore so certain that the gates of hell shall not prevail against them. If one asks for proof of this, we answer: Christ speaks plainly of his sheep; no one shall snatch them out of his hand.

This is, of course, an incomprehensible doctrine; for our reason says: If those are condemned because they were unbelievers, why are these saved, since all men are unbelievers by nature? We should not inquire into this mystery, but should keep to the word of the prophet, through whom God says: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help." [Hosea 13:9] Whoever walks within the bounds of this passage will be preserved from Pelagianism on the one hand and from Calvinism on the other, and will always have the Lutheran doctrine of the election of grace. By this one can also recognize whether a preacher rightly teaches the doctrine that he makes the good Lord the cause of our salvation, but not the author of our damnation.

In the passage quoted by the Formula of Concord, Acts 13:48, it is so clear that the election of grace is a cause of our salvation, and all that belongs to it, that it is almost incomprehensible how one cannot see that faith is here described as a consequence of election. Conversely, two verses earlier [Acts 13:46], the reason why the others do not come to faith is also clearly stated, for there Paul and Barnabas say to the hardened Jews: "The Word of God had to be spoken to you first; but now that you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles."

30 [1880 Western District Convention essay by Walther]

We are accused of teaching that if the elect receive faith in time as a result of election, then God did not want to give faith to the rest. But we do not draw this conclusion, but follow the Scriptures, which say that unbelievers do not come to faith as a result of their persistent resistance, not because God did not want to give them faith. Paul says that the unbelieving Jews did not consider themselves worthy of eternal life; therefore eternal life was seriously offered to them. The Holy Spirit also earnestly offered the power to believe through the word which Paul preached to those who did not come to faith, for this power lies in the word which was brought to them. **<AGtG 336>**

So we must not be accused of thinking that we believe: God would like the unbelievers to come to faith, but he is not particularly concerned about their salvation, he lets them go their own way; he may make a feeble attempt to bring them to faith, but he soon gives it up again. No, we do not teach mere *complacency*, as do Reformed who ascribe to God only a weak, impotent will with regard to the damned. We believe that God earnestly desires to save even those who are not chosen, so earnestly that he also sacrificed his Son on the cross for them, and that Christ weeps bitter tears over Jerusalem because it will not allow itself to be saved. But we are merely not solving the mystery that God has given us, which consists in the fact that while some come to faith as a result of election, others do not come to faith, not as a result of God not seriously wanting to save them, but as a result of their willful and stubborn resistance.

And now a Christian—who has been chosen by grace—should rejoice and be comforted from the heart, and be pleased and satisfied with the fact that God, according to his unfathomable mercy, has undertaken to lead him safely and surely to heaven. Therefore we can also take comfort in the fact that our present doctrinal controversy has broken out; for just as a tree is rooted ever more firmly into the earth by the storm, so also we shall, by God's grace, be ever more firmly founded on this saving doctrine in the present struggle and recognize it in ever brighter light.

We now proceed to point b. of our thesis, namely, that the mercy of God and the most holy merit of Christ alone, and nothing that God has foreseen in man, is the cause of the election of grace. And this is precisely the main reason which is attacked in our doctrine. The opponents admit that God did not choose for the sake of good works, which he foreknew from eternity;

but they say that he did so in view of faith. They think this is also consistent with our confession. But let us compare what it says.

There we read in the Formula of Concord (M. p. 557. H 20; St. L. edition p. 380 f.): "Accordingly we reject the following errors ... 4. item, that not only the mercy of God and the most holy merit of Christ, but also in us is a cause of God's election, for the sake of which God has chosen us to eternal life."

Only two reasons for election are given here, namely the mercy of God and the merit of Christ, and then it is rejected if a cause of election is thought to be found in man. The same is repeated in the *Solid Declaration*. There it says (M. p. 723. § 87 and 88; St. L. edition p. 489): "By this doctrine and declaration of the eternal and beatific election of the elect children of God, God is given his glory wholly and completely, that by pure mercy in Christ, without all unremoved merit or good works, he saves us, according to the purpose of his will, as it is written, Eph. 1:5: 'He has made us sons of Himself through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of His glory and grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved'. Therefore it is wrong and unjust to teach that not only the mercy of God and the most holy merit of Christ alone, but also in us a cause of God's election, for the sake of which God has chosen us to eternal life. For not only before we did anything good, but also before **<AGtG 337>** we were born, he chose us in Christ, yes, before the foundation of the world was laid, and 'that the purpose of God might be according to election, it was said to him, not by merit of works, but by grace of the caller, thus: the greater shall serve the lesser; as it is written: 'I loved Jacob, but Esau I have hated', Rom. 9:11, Gen. 25:23, Mal. 1:2 f."

Note the words in the Latin: "*aliquid in nobis*", according to which it is therefore false when it is taught that "something" in us is a cause of election; it does not mean here: a good work, a worthiness in us, but something in us. And first it says: only the mercy of God and the merit of Christ; thus faith is evidently excluded, for it is something in us, *aliquid in nobis*. If the confessors three hundred years ago had had the doctrine which is now held up to us by opponents as the only correct Lutheran doctrine, they would probably have been wise enough to have said: the mercy of God, the merit of Christ and faith; but the latter is not mentioned, indeed it is added: "something in us". It may therefore be something which we ourselves have by

nature, or which we have procured by our natural powers, or which God has wrought in us by his Spirit of grace; all this is excluded.

This, by the way, is already implied in what we discussed under point a., namely, that the election of grace is the ground and cause of our salvation and all that belongs to it. How could this be the case if faith were the cause for the sake of which we are chosen? No, faith must certainly be the cause of election; it does not occur to us to say that a man can be saved without faith, or that God did not also have faith in mind when he elected us. Of course he did think of faith, but he thought of it as the means by which man is to be saved, and as that which is to be given and preserved to man precisely on the basis of election.

Just think: when the Savior said to his disciples, "You did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you to go and bear fruit, and your fruit will remain," he meant to say: Of course, you did what was good in the first place, in that you sought me out and followed me, and because you are now in the right faith, I will choose you? Certainly not; but everyone can see that the Lord's meaning with these words is rather this: You would have been among the scribes and Pharisees and let them lead you to hell; but I came before you and sought you out, gave you faith and will keep you in it to the end and save you eternally; you have me to thank for all this, not yourselves. Only those who go to the Scriptures with a preconceived idea will interpret these words as if the Savior wanted to say: Now praise God! you have accepted me in faith, now I will also choose you. No, the Lord wants to take away all boasting from the disciples and wants to say to them: "You are not a hair's breadth better than the Jewish people who rejected me in unbelief; but I saw you lying in your blood, and there I said to you: You shall live. This does not merely mean: You shall go to heaven, for then they would ask: Yes, how shall we get in? but it means: I will give you and keep you the faith by which alone and surely you will go to heaven.

This is the clear teaching of our Church, which she has laid down in the passages we have just heard. The election of grace is a cause of our salvation and everything that belongs to it. Well, what belongs to it? Above all, faith and perseverance in faith. The passage quoted says: "For not only before we have done something good" and so on. **<AGtG 338>** Here we are told that we must attribute everything to the grace of God and the merit of Christ, as we can see from the fact

that the election of grace is an eternal one. But if it is eternal, it follows that works cannot be the cause, for at the time when God chose, no man had yet done good works. The Formula of Concord has the following argument: God chose the believers before they had done anything good; the works were therefore not yet there when God chose. He did not allow Himself to be determined by anything in man when He chose him, for there was nothing in him yet, he had not even been born. Now if God did not allow Himself to be determined by anything that He saw in man, because it was not yet present, then He did not allow Himself to be determined by faith either; for this too was not yet in man, because he had not yet been born.

Now if that conclusion of the Formula of Concord is correct, then this conclusion is obviously also correct: therefore faith cannot be the cause of election either, because it was not yet present when the election took place. Yes, if this followed in time, then it would be correct to say that God waits until a person converts and then chooses him. But since man was not yet a man, and the decision of election was already made before he was born, it necessarily follows that we are not only elected to salvation, but also to the way in which God wants to lead us to salvation.

We see this also from the following passage of the *Solid Declaration* (M. p. 708. § 23. St. L. edition p. 480), where it is expressly said: "God has considered all and every person of the elect, who are to be saved through Christ, in grace, elected to salvation, and also decreed that he would bring, help, promote, strengthen and preserve them in the way now reported, by his grace, gifts and effects."

Thus, according to our confession, election by grace is a decree of God to lead a person to salvation by the ordinance of grace. This is the election of grace of the Formula of Concord. Thus repentance, conversion, faith, justification, sanctification, patience in the cross, perseverance to the end is a realization of election, and not the other way around. [i.e. “faith is the cause of election”.]

Whoever says, as the openly rationalistic peddlers do: I believe, I am an elect person; for so and so I have done; I have been converted to Christ, I do all kinds of good works, and therefore God has elected me: he takes away the glory of God and gives it to himself, thus making himself God. But that is worse than the Darwinists now saying that man evolved from an ape. For these people still admit that man did not create himself, but that in their opinion he crawled out of an ape, and that he then behaved in such and such a way until he became the beautiful creature that he is. But these say:

We are the cause of our salvation; that is much worse than if I said: I am the cause that I was created. For there I speak only of temporal life; but he who makes his works the cause of election speaks of eternal life. But a man does not even say that he created himself; if anyone wanted to say that, people would quickly put him in a madhouse, for he **<AGtG 339>** would obviously be insane. How much more horrible it is to say: I may not have created myself physically, but I have procured eternal life for myself!

But even faith cannot be the cause of election, as others say. Scripture says in many places that God gives faith. So how can God give me eternal life for the sake of faith? — For election is an election to eternal life. — On the contrary, the reason that God gives me faith must be that he wants to save me eternally. If I give someone a gift and he has become rich through my liberality, I will not first love him for the sake of his riches and say: He is now much dearer to me than before, because he has become a rich man. No, my goodness is the reason that he has become rich, so his wealth cannot be the reason that I love him. I do not give something to someone because he accepts it; but conversely, he has accepted it because I have given it to him. Bliss is given to me through faith. Now my acceptance, i.e. my faith, cannot be the reason why God gives me salvation; for I could not accept it at all if it had not been given to me beforehand.

However, we distinguish between the love that God has for us before and after our conversion; but this is what we want to say here: the fact that we have converted to Christ is not the cause that God has chosen us, just as little is it the cause that a person loves his neighbor because he has become rich through his goodness. There is a twofold love of God: first, love for the whole world, according to which he wants all men to be saved. But when God has brought a person to faith, then pleasing love arises. God is not pleased with the world as it is; on the contrary, God's wrath is kindled against the wickedness of the world; but again he has in his heart the love of mercy. When a man has become a believer, God sees him as clothed with the robe of Christ's righteousness, and then he pleases him. Then God not only has compassion on his misery, but in a sense takes pleasure in him. God now looks upon him with the greatest pleasure: everything he does, even when he eats, drinks and sleeps, is pleasing to God, for he sees him in Christ Jesus, with whose righteousness he is clothed. So it is God who, through his counsel of grace, causes me to become a

creature pleasing to him. Before, I was only an object of pity to him; but after I came to faith, pity turned into fatherly love. God could not yet love people as a father, because they were not yet his children; so that he now loves us as a father, he has drawn us to his Son JEsu Christ.

We must therefore note this according to § 23: God has decreed that he will bring his elect to salvation, or, as it is called in Latin, to make them partakers of salvation, *participem reddere salutis*. Now this includes faith, perseverance in faith; all this is called a consequence of election, so it must be the cause of all this.

It is also very important that nowhere in the Bible does it say that we are chosen for the sake of faith. There are indeed the words: "Those whom he foreknew, he also ordained" (Romans 8:29); but when people say, "What is it that he foreknew? surely it must be faith," we say to them: Dear people, if you were the Holy Spirit, we would believe you; but we do not let men put anything into the Bible. It **<AGtG 340>** says nothing more than: The good God provided beforehand, and not: The good God provided faith beforehand. Now no man, indeed no angel or archangel, has anything to add to these words. It sometimes happens that Scripture does not say in one place what it says in another; but there is no passage in which it is said that God foreknew faith or chose us for the sake of faith.

Chemnitz also testifies to this in his handbook. He writes: "Does this election of God first take place in the time when men repent and believe? or is it done in consideration of their piety seen beforehand? St. Paul says in Eph. 1: "We were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world"; and in 2 Tim. 1: "He saved us and called us, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. So also the election of God is not according to our faith and righteousness, but is for a cause of all things; for whom he has ordained or chosen, them he has also called and justified. Rom. 8."

Here Chemnitz says quite clearly: Election precedes faith, and faith follows election; therefore God cannot have elected for the sake of faith.

Incidentally, all theologians without exception, to whom we are referred, reject the idea that God chose for the sake of faith. For of course we cannot hide the fact that

in the seventeenth century the doctrine became established in the Lutheran Church that God did not choose for the sake of faith, but nevertheless in view of faith. [See this blog post.] Those who taught this thought that they could only in this way refute the Calvinists. But if you ask them, "You yourselves admit that God did not elect on account of faith, what do you mean by this expression 'on account of faith'?" they say all sorts of things, but it is not clear to you what they mean. For these men [orthodox Lutheran theologians] teach quite decidedly that God must give faith to man if he is to attain it, and that God gives it according to his good pleasure.

Now since faith is evidently a consequence of election, we have declared that we will go back to the way our Lutheran Confession speaks, and will not accept the expression "in view [*Ansehung*] of faith we are elect"; for that is neither in Scripture nor in the Confession. We do not want to make heretics of those noble men who thought they had to speak in this way for the sake of the Calvinists; but neither do we want to refute the false teachers by a doctrine which we ourselves do not approve of. We should not, as Job says, defend God with cunning; therefore we speak as the Scriptures speak.

Chemnitz continues: "And Eph. 1. Paul does not say that we are chosen because we were holy or will be holy, but says: we are chosen that we may become holy; for the election of grace is the cause of all that pertains to salvation; as Paul says: 'We have come to inheritance, having been foreordained according to the purpose of him who works all things, according to **<AGtG 341>** the counsel of his will, that we might be something to the praise of his glory; and according to the effect we believe,' etc. And this election was not made out of consideration of our present or future works, but according to the purpose and grace of God, Rom. 9. 2 Tim. 1. . . From this it is certain that no elect person will finally remain and persevere in impenitence and unbelief." (Cited in Frank, Theologie der Concordienformel. IV, 336. 338.)

It is very important that it is finally said that no elect person finally remains and perseveres in impenitence and unbelief. To him, then, who is in impenitence and unbelief, we can confidently say: Do not trouble yourself with the election of grace! You cannot take comfort in it as long as you remain in impenitence.

This whole passage clearly shows that Chemnitz teaches: God has chosen us to faith, therefore he cannot have chosen with regard to faith in the sense that he foreknew faith.

How clearly Scripture expresses this when it says, among other things, as has already been mentioned, that God has ordained us to adoption; furthermore: "And as many as believed

were ordained to eternal life" (yes, according to the basic text it says: had been ordained)! It does not say: and were ordained to eternal life, as many of them believed — that is what it would have to say if God had chosen us for the sake of faith — but conversely it says: and believed, as many of them were ordained to eternal life.

If we carry into these clear passages the doctrine that God has chosen us for the sake of faith, we obscure the whole of Scripture, make everything uncertain, and gradually lose sight of the truths of Holy Scripture. No, if they want to make us waver, then let us hold firmly and rigidly to these words, and let us do like Luther, who in his disputation with Zwingli at Marburg about Holy Communion wrote the words in chalk on the table: "This is my body." For this is irrefutable: since God has decreed to make the elect partakers of eternal salvation and to provide all that is necessary for this, the election of grace must also be a cause of our faith; for faith is a necessary condition for salvation. This is the main reason why we make faith not the cause but the consequence of election.

Sebastian Schmidt, who often says that God has elected us in view of faith, but who always speaks in such a way that one can see that it does not occur to him to make faith the cause of election, writes: "But this predestination of God is by pure grace, without any merit of works, whether it be said that they are by natural or supernatural powers, and without any regard to these works, or even to faith, as a condition which moves God to predestination on the ground of his own worthiness, whether it be real and natural or imputed." (*Aphorismi theol. 1655. p. 294.*)

He thus expressly says: The election of grace is done without all regard to works, yes, even without regard to faith, Latin: *respectu*. But what is the difference between "in view of" and "in consideration of"? But this much is clear: he **<AGtG 342>** does not want to make faith the cause of election, not even insofar as a worthiness is ascribed to it for the sake of Christ.

The same Schmidt writes: "There is no more cause of predestination in the predestined man than in the reprobate; it proceeds rather from the mere divine decree, which is founded on the general grace and merit of Christ, which by its nature excludes every cause on the part of man." (*Aphorismi theol. 1655. p. 295.*)

Therefore, if anyone asks: Why are certain persons damned? The answer is: Because of their own fault. But if it be

asked, Why are other persons saved? we must answer, The reason is not in them, but in God's mercy and Christ's merit alone. And it is a false conclusion to say: If the cause of damnation lies in man, then the cause of salvation must also lie in him.

It is the same here as with conversion. The synergists have always said: The reason why one person is not converted is his reluctance; therefore the reason why the other is converted must also be that he is not reluctant. No, say all our theologians, that is not the cause. The reason why the one is not converted lies in him; that is precisely his reluctance; but the reason why the other is converted does not lie in him, but in God alone.

Finally, Schmidt writes: "Faith does not grasp the benefit of predestination, as it grasps the benefit of justification, sanctification, etc., so that it makes predestination its own through faith, as it obtains its justification through faith; but the believer comforts and strengthens his faith from predestination, so that he says with the apostle: 'If God is for us, who can be against us? (*Aphorismi theol. 1655. p. 295*.)

Let us also listen again to several quotations which we have already quoted in our report of 1877, p. 84 ff., which likewise testify that nothing has moved the dear God to choose us that He has seen in us.

Thus Gerhard writes: "We confess with a loud voice that we hold that God found nothing good in the man to be elected to eternal life, that he took no account of good works, nor of the use of free will, nor even of faith, so that he chose some because he was moved by it, or for the sake of it." (*Loc. de elect. et reprob. § 161*.)

Furthermore, John Olearius writes: "The doctrine of the Lutherans ... ascribes everything to God, nothing to man. This is not opposed to ... 2. faith, for this is by no means our work, but God's gift, nor a condition to be fulfilled by us, but a requirement which is bestowed by God by grace through the ordinary means of salvation." (*L. c. p. 1684*.)

Quenstedt also writes: **<AGtG 343>** "The moving cause (of predestination) is partly internal, partly external. The internal is the grace of God, which is manifested in vain, which absolutely excludes any merit of human works, or anything that has the name of a work or an action, whether it is done by God's grace or by natural forces. For God has not chosen us according to works, but by his mere

grace. Nor does faith itself belong here, if it is regarded as a more or less worthy condition (whether in itself, or according to an estimate of value added to faith by the will of God), because nothing of this belongs to the counsel of election as a cause that moves and impels God to make such a counsel, but this must be attributed to the pure grace of God. This sentence is proved first of all from Romans 9:15-16: 'Whom I have mercy on, I have mercy on. So then it is not up to someone's will or behavior, but to God's mercy.'" (*Th. did.-pol. III, 25*.)

Calov writes: "It is not because of faith that we are called elect, but through faith in Christ, of which the former is the characteristic expression of the moving cause, the latter of the instrumental cause. Blessed Meisner reminds us: 'If faith is called the cause of election, is it not to be understood as the moving or motivating cause?' 'For', says Blessed Hutter, 'election does not depend on faith as its moving or meritorious cause.' … And the blessed Gerard says that it is absurd to say that faith is the motive cause of election." (*Syst. Tom. X, 629*)

Finally, Dannhauer writes: "Predestination does not depend on any work, on any merit, on any motive which is from us or through us, which is in us, for the sake of which election would have happened; not on faith, in so far as it is a work or the fruit of faith. For thus we also say that the decree is a purely gracious one. This graciousness excludes the merits, not the order [of salvation]; faith here is not a work, but the foreknown beggar's hand. Therefore nothing of boast, even the least, is left to faith, in that it takes, not gives or acquires. Therefore God saw nothing of active worthiness in man, nothing good that was not from Him, God Himself. God remains the cause and never becomes the caused: in fact, in him "nothing is earlier in time; but neither does the will depend on foreknowledge, although it is earlier in concept." (*Hodos. Phaen. 7. p. 289*.)

Scripture says: "Death is the wages of sin; but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom. 6:23. It thus calls eternal life a gift of God; but if it is a gift, then we are not speaking of something that God saw in man and that moved him to make the decision to choose him to eternal life.

Luther writes: **<AGtG 344>** "It is a precious thing to have faith and great power; yes, if it were in our power or, if we had it

right away, to keep it! There is no doubt that faith does all that the devil and death must give way to it; but where is the art of keeping it? God has left it to himself to give and take away faith as he wills, and to make it strong or weak as he pleases." (Sermons on Genesis 1 from 1527. Erl. Vol. 34, p. 195, on the 32nd chapter).

Our Formula of Concord says the same thing, when it (M. p. 713. § 43. St. L. ed. p. 483 [cf. FC SD XI 43-44]) thus speaks: "And inasmuch as the mystery of predestination is revealed to us in the Word of God, and if we abide by it, it is a useful, salutary, and comforting doctrine; for it confirms the article very powerfully, that we are justified and saved without all our works and merits, purely by grace, for Christ's sake alone; For before the world was, before we were, even before the foundation of the world was laid, when we could do no good, we were chosen to salvation by grace in Christ according to the purpose of God, Rom. 9:11, 2 Tim. 1:9. All opinions and erroneous doctrines concerning the powers of our natural will are thereby laid to rest, because God in His counsel before the foundation of the world considered and ordained that He Himself would create and work in us all things that pertain to our conversion by the power of His Holy Spirit through the Word."

Here again it is said: Only the mercy of God and the merit of Christ is the cause of our election, and furthermore: This also belongs to the counsel of election by grace, that God has decreed that he himself wants to work in us everything that belongs to our conversion.

For it is said to us: Faith precedes justification; why should it not also precede the election of grace? no one is really righteous for his own person except one who has already believed! We answer: The latter is true, but where does it come from that I am justified by faith? It is because God has already justified all men without exception on his part. [Objective Justification!] When the heavenly Father raised his Son from the dead, he justified him, who is our substitute, and so in this our substitute he has at the same time justified all mankind. But this is not the case with the election of grace. The relationship of faith to election is different from that to justification. God did not elect all men to salvation and say, for example, "Now you may also take out the election of grace by faith. The election of grace is not a general one, like justification, but a particular one, or as the Latins say: a particular one; for the Savior says: "Many are called, but few are chosen." Therefore, man does not first have to make use of the election of grace through faith in order to become an elect person, for this has already happened from

eternity. He who is chosen is already chosen before the foundation of the world, and faith must now grasp not the election but the merit of Christ, so that he may attain the salvation that is already promised to him through the election of grace.**<AGtG 345>**

We also teach that no one can enter heaven except through faith; that faith is just as necessary for an elect person as it is for him to be saved. But this is what we say: To whom God has chosen from eternity, he has also decided to give faith, and what he decides, he actually carries out. God certainly wants to give faith to the whole world; he also offers it to it. So if someone does not believe, he must not say: God has not decided to give me faith, therefore I do not have it; but because God foresaw that he would remain a wicked person, he has decided: I will not force him into heaven. God says to such an unbelieving person: If thou wilt not, go thou to hell: but accuse me not, as though I would not have saved thee.

The doctrine we have had up to now is therefore not changed in the least by the election of grace. We must always show people the same way that we have shown them so far. The doctrine of the election of grace brings sweet consolation only to the godly, zealous Christian: If you believe in the Lord Jesus, you can and should be sure that he will take you into his arms and hold you tightly in them, and that nothing in heaven, on earth or in hell will tear you out of his arms. This is all the comfort that election of grace gives.

Let us now proceed to point c., namely, that those who reject the doctrine expressed in points a. and b. cannot be regarded as confessionally faithful Lutherans in this respect.

The Formula of Concord (M. p. 557. § 21. St. L. ed. p. 381 [FC Ep XI 20, 21]) bears witness to this. In the foregoing the three errors of the Calvinists are rejected, that God does not will that all men should repent and believe the gospel; that if God calls us to himself, he does not mean that all men should come to him; that God does not will that everyone should be saved, etc. Hereupon the error is rejected, "that not only the mercy of God and the most holy merit of Christ, but also in us is a cause of God's election, for the sake of which God has chosen us to eternal life", and now it says further in the

Formula of Concord: "Which are all blasphemous and frightful erroneous doctrines, whereby Christians are deprived of all comfort which they have in the holy Gospel and the use of the holy sacraments, and for this reason should not be tolerated in the Church of God."

42 [1880 Western District Convention essay by Walther]

With this § 21, then, our Church declares that all those are unfaithful to the form of right doctrine who add a third cause to the mercy of God and the merit of Christ, even if it were faith.

Therefore, as much as it matters to us that we adhere to the doctrine of our Lutheran Church, it also matters to us that we hold fast to it: there are only two causes of the election of grace: God's mercy and Christ's merit. Anyone who adds a third ceases to be a faithful Lutheran on this point. It is therefore no small thing, but something very important, to make faith the cause of election; for our church calls this a terrible and blasphemous doctrine.

## Thesis II.

Nor is this the doctrine of election by grace in a wider, but in its proper sense.

C.-F. 706. § 9. 708. § 24. Cf. 707. § 15-23. [FC SD XI 9, 24; cf. pars. 15-23] **<AGtG 346>**

This thesis is added because it is said that in a certain sense it is admitted that faith is a fruit and consequence of election by grace, and therefore that election by grace is also a cause of faith; but, it is said, only when election by grace is understood to be something which can be so called only in a wider sense. And here it is maintained that the Formula of Concord does not speak of election of grace in the narrower sense, at least not alone, but of election of grace in a wider sense; and this is supposed to be proved from the passages quoted.

In the *Solid Declaration* it says (M. p. 706. § 9; St. L. Exg. p. 479): "Nor is this eternal election or decree of God unto eternal life to be considered merely in the secret unsearchable counsel of God, as if it had no more in it, or no more belonged to it, nor was more to be considered in it, than that God had beforehand seen which and how many should be saved, which and how many damned, or that he alone held such a pattern: this one shall be saved, that one shall be damned; this one shall abide, that one shall not abide."

It is claimed that here the Formula of Concord renounces an election of grace in the narrower sense, as if it were to be understood as nothing other than that God has ordained some to eternal salvation and condemned others to eternal damnation. — Furthermore, it is claimed that in the

Formula of Concord (M. p. 708. § 24. St. L. edition p. 480) thus reads: "All this is comprehended according to Scripture in the doctrine of God's eternal election to adoption and eternal salvation, is also

to be understood by it, and is never to be excluded nor omitted when one speaks of God's purpose, providence, election, and decree of salvation."

So they say: According to the Formula of Concord, the doctrine of election by grace also includes the doctrine of the general order of grace; if this is now added to it, then one could well say that election by grace is the cause of faith; for faith is of course caused by the preaching of the divine Word. Now if the calling through the Word also belongs to the doctrine of election by grace, then one could also say quite well: "Faith comes from election by grace". But the way we talk about election by grace is wrong, because we are talking about election by grace in the narrower sense.

But this whole explanation is not correct. The Formula of Concord speaks of an election of grace in the narrower or proper sense of the word, and not of an election of grace which comprehends in itself the general order of salvation and grace. This can be seen from the following. [This is the talking point in the "Pastoral Conferences" of 1879 and 1880.]

In the Formula of Concord it says (M. p. 705. § 5; St. L. edition p. 478): "But the eternal election of God *vel praedestinatio*, that is, God's decree of salvation, is not especially for the pious and the wicked, but only for the children of God, who are chosen and ordained to eternal life before the foundation of the world was laid, **<AGtG 347>** as Paul says in Eph. 1:5: "He has chosen us in Christ Jesus and ordained us to adoption."

Here our Formula of Concord says that it speaks of such an election by grace, which only concerns the believing, pious children of God. Now the opponents will not claim that the general order of salvation and grace only concerns the pious; after all, it concerns the whole world. Therefore, when the Formula of Concord says that the election of grace of which it speaks concerns only the pious, it testifies that it speaks of an election of grace in the proper sense.

Then in the *Epitome* (M. p.554. § 5. St. L. edition p.379) it is said: "But the predestination or eternal election of God is only for the pious, well-pleasing children of God, which is a cause of their salvation, which he also creates, and what belongs to the same, decrees."

But the order of grace is given to all people. When it is said that election is for the children of God, it means that it concerns them, as it is called in Latin: *pertinet*.

That is one reason. The other reason why we firmly believe that the Formula of Concord speaks of the election of grace in the proper sense, is this: because, after the eight points (M. p. 707 and 708. St. L. ed. p. 480) has spoken of the order of grace, it is continued in the

44 [1880 Western District Convention essay by Walther]

*Solid Declaration*: "And in such His counsel, purpose, and decree, God has not only prepared salvation in general, but has also considered all and every person of the elect, who are to be saved through Christ, in grace, elected them to salvation, and also decreed that He would bring, help, promote, strengthen, and preserve them in the way now reported, by His grace, gifts, and effects."

In the Latin it is said that God has prepared the salvation of His own, from which it is clear that the foregoing speaks of the order of grace insofar as it concerns the elect. For if only the general order of grace were meant, in so far as it concerns all men, then the eight points should have indicated at the same time who is condemned. This is also part of the general order of grace, that we tell people that if they do not turn to Christ, they will perish; not only that faith saves, but also that unbelief condemns. But nothing is said about this in the eight points. In the first point it is said on what the election of grace is based, namely on the redemption of Jesus Christ. So it also says

*Solid Declaration* (M. p. 720. § 75. St. L. ed. p. 487) expressly states: "And because our election to eternal life is not founded on our piety or virtue, but solely on Christ's merit and the gracious will of his Father, who cannot deny himself, because he is immutable in his will and nature" etc.

The first point is therefore added simply so that we may know on what the election of grace is based. There is no doubt that the Formula of Concord wants to teach here: You Lutherans, if you want to preach the doctrine of election by grace in a truly biblical way, you must not begin with the fact that God has chosen a number of people, but with the fact that the whole world is redeemed by Christ; and only after it has been redeemed is an election by grace possible. **<AGtG 348>**

Then it continues: "2. that such merits and benefits of Christ are to be presented, offered and distributed to us through his Word and Sacrament."

Note the word "us", i.e. us Christians, not the world! For right at the beginning the Formula of Concord says that it speaks of the election of grace, which concerns the believing children of God; and now it says: there is also to be taught at the same time how God presents the good deeds of Christ to us through his Word.

Point 4 also speaks only of those who accept Christ in true faith.

Finally, everything is summed up again in point 8. First the election, then the calling is stated, so that the eight points always speak of the elect, but of the elect in general; for now it says: "And in such His

counsel, purpose, and decree, God has not only prepared salvation in general, but has also considered in grace all and every person of the elect who are to be saved through Christ, has elected them to salvation, and has also decreed that He will bring, help, promote, strengthen, and preserve them in the manner now reported, by His grace, gifts, and effects."

In Latin, this sentence begins with the words: *et quidem*, which literally means: and indeed God has in such a way his counsel, etc. This is to indicate: now comes the main thing. For if you now know that God has prepared salvation for the elect in general, the question arises: Has God also thought of certain persons and ordained them to salvation? Answer: Yes, that is why it is said: not only has He prepared the salvation of His own in general, but He has also chosen all and every person of the elect for salvation.

The Formula of Concord means: God has not merely decided that if people are such and such, then I will choose them, but he has already carried certain persons in his spirit and called them by name and said: I will choose them. When it says here that he has decreed to bring them to salvation in the way now reported, etc., it also indicates that the eight points describe the way in which God wants to save the elect.

Thus the counsel of grace concerning the salvation of men belongs to the counsel of election of grace only in so far as God has also prescribed the same way to salvation for the elect that all men are to follow; not that God has made a special order concerning the elect, as if he wanted to save them in a different way from all men.

There is therefore no doubt at all that the Formula of Concord speaks of election in its proper sense, and not in a broader sense. For although the eight points speak of the path to salvation that every person should take, it is presented here as the path by which God wants to lead the elect to heaven. But the main reason remains that which we have already heard in § 5. and which is clear even to the simple-minded, namely, that the election of grace alone is for the pious children of God. But this is the election of grace in a so-called narrower sense, and not an election of grace, which is basically nothing more than the doctrine of the way to salvation; for the latter is revealed for all men, and not only for the elect.

Then the opponents also defeat themselves; for if they speak, as they say, of a so-called election of grace in a narrower sense, and not of the election of grace in a wider sense, as the Formula of Concord is supposed to teach, they give a doctrine which the Formula of **<AGtG 349>** Concord

rejects. For the latter clearly and distinctly says not only that election of grace is not a mere pattern (*militaris delectus*), but, after summarizing "the whole doctrine of the purpose, counsel, will, and ordinance of God, concerning our redemption, calling, justification, and beatification," it continues: "All this is comprehended according to Scripture in the doctrine of the eternal election of God to sonship and eternal blessedness, is also to be understood under it, and is never to be excluded nor omitted when speaking of the purpose, providence, election, and ordinance of God to blessedness."

Those, therefore, who in the doctrine of eternal election do not comprehend all this, do not understand it, exclude it, or omit it, not only give a doctrine of election by grace different from our confession, but also one which rejects it as false. We therefore rightly say to our opponents: You teach a false election of grace according to the Formula of Concord; for there is no such election of grace. For God did not hold a mere election and say: I will create so and so many millions of people, and of these I will choose so and so many thousands, but the others I will reject. There is no such Calvinistic election of grace; rather, whom God has chosen, he has also chosen to walk the narrow way to eternal life. For first I must go the way, and only then do I reach the goal. Now if God has ordained me to the goal, then of course he must also ordain me to the path by which I will reach the goal. If someone says to me: I give you all the gold and silver that lies in the sea, you can take it out for yourself, I will say: I thank you for such a gift, for I cannot get it. But if someone says: I will give you all the treasures that are in the Mississippi, and I will see to it that they come out; I will hire divers and have apparatus made for this purpose, so that the treasures can be brought to light and you can also get them: then I will say: I will put up with it. But God is not the kind of giver who gives us something and then leaves us to see how we get it; no, when he gives us something, he also makes sure that we get it. We are saved to salvation by the power of God through faith; not because of faith, but through faith.

Incidentally, when we call our doctrine of election of grace a doctrine of election of grace in the narrower sense, we do not of course mean to say that we make a distinction between election of grace in the broader and narrower sense. No, we have only an election of grace in the strict sense; we make this distinction only for the sake of our opponents. We use here, as the scholars say, the so-called *antanaclasis*. For if someone uses a word wrongly,

then the same word is often used in disputation, but in the right sense. The Pharisees, for example, asked the Lord: What shall we do that we may work the works of God? With these words they were obviously speaking of the works of the law by which they wanted to be saved. What then does the Savior do? He says: "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent. So here the Lord takes the word "work" out of the mouth of the opponents and gives it a different, namely the right meaning. He calls faith the work of God, but in a different sense than the Pharisees. The opponents say . We have no objection to your saying that election by grace is a cause of faith; but then you must also understand election by grace in the wider sense, in so far as it includes in itself the order of grace for all men. How do they seek to prove this? They **<AGtG 350>** refer to the fact that many words in Holy Scripture are used in a broader and a narrower sense. The word "gospel", for example, has a twofold meaning in Scripture; once it means the good news of the grace of God in Christ; the other time it means the whole doctrine which Christ taught, thus also the law. Now if by the gospel I also understand the law, then I say: here the word "gospel" is used in a broader sense. Paul says that according to the gospel Christ will also judge the Gentiles, who do not have the written law, much less the gospel. So here the word "gospel" is used in the broader sense of the law and the message of grace. But if I say to someone: I am now talking about the gospel, which may only be preached to poor sinners, to broken and crushed hearts, then I am obviously talking about the gospel in the narrower sense; for no one will claim that the gospel in the broader sense, i.e. insofar as it includes the law, should also be preached to broken hearts. The law has already had its effect on them, so I can only preach to them the gospel in the narrower sense, namely only the message of grace of Christ Jesus, the Savior of sinners; but the gospel in the broader sense must be preached to the whole world. Now the Formula of Concord says that it speaks of the election of grace, which is only for the pious, so it speaks of the election of grace in the narrower, or best, sense. For she has expressly said beforehand that one must distinguish between providence, *praesceientia*, which is about good and evil, and between election or *praedestinatio*, which is only about the pious children of God.

The Tübingen theologians write in their *Censura de doctrina Huberi*: "Now we come to the Book of Concord, which, apart from the general will, mercy and good pleasure to make all men blessed through Christ to be grasped by faith, deals so broadly and so deliberately (*ex professo*)

with specific election that we believe that no man of sound mind could be found who would either be able or dare to deny it." (*Acta Huberiana II*, 36. Cited by Frank op. cit. p. 284.)

## Thesis III.

Whoever wishes to remove the offense which reason takes at this doctrine can do so only by either making what God has seen in man the cause of his election, as the synergists do, and thus falsifying the Lutheran doctrine of free will and conversion (a), or by making God the cause of reprobation, as Calvin does, and thus overturning the Lutheran doctrine of God's holiness and common grace (b).

a. C.-F. 588 f. § 3. 5. 594. § 24. 25. 598. § 40-42. 609. § 87. 606 f. § 75-78. [FC SD II 3, 5, 24, 25, 40-42, 75-78, 87]

b. C.-F. 557. § 17-19. [FC Ep XI 17-19]

It is true that the doctrine of the election of grace contains in itself inexplicable mysteries; for on the one hand it says that he who is saved is saved only by God's grace **<AGtG 351>** and effect without his doing anything; on the other hand it says that he who is damned is damned only through his own fault, without God doing anything about it. Reason says: If those who are saved are saved only because God works in them what is necessary, without their doing anything themselves, then it follows that those who are damned are also damned because God does not do this in them. Or, conversely, if it is claimed that those who are condemned are condemned only through their own fault, then it necessarily follows that those who are saved are saved because they do not have this fault, because they behave better than those who do, because there is something in them why God does not condemn them, but chooses them.

In order to resolve this apparent contradiction, reason must take one of these two paths: either it must say that God has chosen men because they have either done something for the sake of which God chose them, or that they have at least omitted something by virtue of their free will which would have prevented their choice; it must therefore say that the cause of the choice must lie in man. Or reason says: If man is not the cause of his choice, he cannot be the cause of his rejection. The first solution is that of the synergists, the second that of the Calvinists.

49 [1880 Western District Convention essay by Walther]

Synergists are those false teachers who claim that man can and must do something for his conversion and salvation. “Synergists” means co-workers in German. This error arose as early as Luther's time, but quite secretly; in fact, the first to teach synergism was Melanchthon. This otherwise excellent man allowed himself to be seduced by his reason into introducing the first seeds of synergism into his books in the later years of Luther's time. This can be proven by his own words. *)

*) He writes: "Since the promise is universal, and there is no double, contradictory will in God, the cause of the acceptance of the one and the rejection of the other must necessarily be in man himself. The right use of this doctrine in the exercises of faith and in the consolation of souls will confirm the truth that three things belong together, the Word of God, the Holy Spirit, and the will." (*Corpus Reform. XXII, 658* [?]) [See Bente’s “Historical Introductions” **here**.]

Leonhard Hutter has written a defense of the Formula of Concord; he calls it *Concordia Concors*, or concord of one accord, because the Calvinists had said that our *Concordia* was a *Concordia discors*, that is, a discord of two accords. In it, this theologian also explains, among other things, why the Formula of Concord could not present Melanchthon as a champion of pure doctrine in the same way as Luther. Hutter says

Hutter: "The last *loci communes* or main doctrinal pieces of Philipp Melanchthon are not entirely orthodox. ... He bases (*ponit*) election not only on God's will and mercy, but partly on the will of man. For he expressly says: 'In man is and must be a cause why some are chosen to salvation, others rejected and damned. And again: 'Since the promise is universal and there are no contradictory wills in God, it is necessary that there should be a cause of **<AGtG 352>** difference in us as to why Saul is rejected and David accepted, that is, it is necessary that there should be a different behavior (*actionem*) in these two. These emblems of Philipp Melanchthon argue directly (*diametrically)* with the orthodox doctrine of free will: 'Let there be a cause in us why some assent to the promise of grace and others do not.'" (*Concordia Concors*, p. 346. sq.)

If those who go to heaven are saved merely because God has worked all good in them, then, as Melanchthon said, those who perish must also perish merely because God has not worked good in them; so we must assume that man also contributes a little, even if it is only a weak affirmation that he is saved,

or at least he must refrain from resisting. Then, after all, the cause that a part is saved must be in man.

That certainly sounds quite reasonable; if it were so, then the mystery would be solved as beautifully as one could wish. But that is no different from saying: Whoever is good will go to heaven because he is good. That is the religion of the world, we are all born with it, but it is not the gospel of our God. No matter how much our reason rears up against it, it is true and remains true: it is not up to someone's will and running, but to God's mercy; and this is just as true: Death is the wages of sin, and is not the result of an eternal decree of God that certain people are not saved but damned.

Whoever says that man must also do something about it, or at least must refrain from doing something evil, and that is the reason why God prefers the one to the other, does not know the Scriptures. For it says: "What have you that you have not received? but if you have received it, what do you boast about, if you have not received it?" [1 Corinthians 4:7] That is the whole Bible, that is the whole Christian religion, the word: by grace you have been saved [Ephesians 2:8]. Every other religion refers man to his goodness, to his good works; but the Christian religion points man to the grace of God alone, to the merit of Christ, to nothing more, and declares man to be dead in sins by nature. But as he who is dead cannot do the least thing to come to life, so also he who is dead in sins, and that is what we all are by nature, can do nothing to awaken from his death of sin, to come to life and do good.

Let us now listen to the passages quoted from the Formula of Concord, in which synergism is rejected.

Thus it says in the *Solid Declaration* (M. p. 588. § 3; St. L. edition p. 401 f.): "For the one part has held and taught that although man is not able by his own powers to fulfill God's commandment, to truly trust, fear, and love God without the grace of the Holy Spirit, yet he has so much natural power left before the new birth that he can to some extent prepare himself for grace, and give the yes-word, but weakly, but, if the grace of the Holy Spirit does not come, he could not accomplish anything with it, but must lie prostrate in the struggle."

The synergists say: Man cannot do everything, but he must do something, he must at least send himself to grace. For example, if I cannot walk and someone is **<AGtG 353>** supposed to carry me, then I must also strive so that he can carry me. But in spiritual things it is not so; we cannot strive so that the good God can do something in us, but the good God must do everything.

Just as Christ did everything to raise Lazarus from death and bring him back from the grave, so God must do everything in spiritual things.

Thus it is said in the *Solid Declaration* (M. p. 588 f. § 5; St. L. Exg. p. 402): "Against these two theories the pure teachers of the Augsburg Confession have taught and argued that man is so corrupted by the fall of our first parents that he is blind by nature in divine matters concerning our conversion and salvation when God's Word is preached, nor can understand it, but considers it foolishness, and does not draw near to God by himself, but is and remains an enemy of God until he is converted, believes, is born again, and is renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit through the word preached and heard by pure grace without any effort on his part."

Here the Formula of Concord says: as long as a person is not converted, he is an enemy of God. "For to be carnally minded," says the Scripture, "is enmity against God." But if he is an enemy of God, it follows that he does nothing other than resist God. The resistance only ceases when God has converted him; then he begins to cooperate through the power of the Holy Spirit. Whoever teaches that man can at least refrain from resisting before his conversion contradicts the Formula of Concord and is a synergist.

Thus it says in the *Solid Declaration* (M. p. 594. M 24. 25; St. L. edition p. 405 f.): "But before man is enlightened, converted, born again, regenerated, and drawn by the Holy Spirit, he can for himself and by his own natural powers begin, work, or cooperate in spiritual things and his own conversion or regeneration, as little as a stone or block or clay. For although he may be able to rule the outward limbs and hear the gospel and consider it to some extent, and even speak of it, as can be seen in the Pharisees and hypocrites, he still considers it foolishness and cannot believe it, and considers himself worse than a block in that he is rebellious and hostile to God's will, unless the Holy Spirit is strong in him and kindles and works faith and other God-pleasing virtues and obedience in him. — Thirdly, Holy Scripture does not attribute conversion, faith in Christ, rebirth, regeneration and all that belongs to the real beginning and accomplishment of these things to the human powers of natural free will, neither in whole nor in half nor in part, but in *solidum*, that is, wholly and entirely, to divine action and the Holy Spirit alone, as the Apologia also says." **<AGtG 354>**

Here we read that in spiritual things man is by nature like a

stone, block or clay. Now go to a sculptor who has made a beautiful statue out of a block of marble, and ask him how much the block of marble has helped him in his work; he will say, "The block has done nothing but hinder me as much as possible. How much I had to chop and file and smooth it before the picture was finished! So also God, as the true spiritual sculptor, must do everything to a man so that he may bring forth the image of God in him again, and we do nothing; for the Scripture says that God alone makes the vessels of mercy. As little as a child born into this world has done anything towards its birth, just as little has a person who is born again through the Holy Spirit done anything towards his rebirth. When an unconverted person goes to church and hears God's word, he usually thinks at first: "What is that clergyman babbling about from the pulpit? I'll never go to him again, he wants to make me into a scoundrel. But lo and behold, he comes to church again, the law delivers him from his sinful ruin, the gospel sheds its light into his soul, and before he knows it, God has overcome him; the new spiritual child is born and finds himself in a new spiritual world, in Christ's kingdom of grace.

But most of the time people remain enemies of God, especially if they have heard the word for a long time and yet have not converted. Even if God's wrath and damnation are held against them, even if they are preached to about God's grace towards poor sinners, about heaven and eternal life, they still want to remain devoted to their carnal lusts; the drunkard wants to continue drinking, the thief wants to continue stealing, the lewd person wants to continue living in lust. In short, whatever the devil's snares there are, the sinful man wants to remain in them, and of course he will not be converted.

So it was with Felix. He wanted money from Paulo, and Paulo preached repentance to him. He was frightened by the apostle's words, the Holy Spirit had knocked at his heart; but instead of asking Paul in his terror, "What must I do to be saved?" he said to him, "Go away for this time." His greed for money prevented him from being converted.

This is how most people feel when they come to church; they realize that something is going on in them, but instead of being moved by the grace of the Holy Spirit to say: O God, welcome, you have now appeared to my heart to bring me out of my misery, I accept the message of grace that you have brought me; instead they say: I will not go to the preacher again, they become quite melancholy. That is the shameful reluctance; unfortunately, man can do that only too well; and only the good Lord can heal us from this

reluctance through the power of his grace. That is why our passage also says that Holy Scripture does not attribute the slightest thing to man with regard to his conversion.

This is the point. If we agree on this, then the other will soon be found. But this is what offends everyone by nature: he should do nothing at all to be saved, and those who are not saved should be blamed for the fact that they are not saved but damned. No human being can understand that. But the dear God is not a man either; he is the All-Wisdom, and we poor earthly worms should not boast that we can see into the depths of God's spirit and work it out: Yes, this moves God and that moves God, and finally this and that comes into being. No, the dear God wants to remain hidden **<AGtG 355>** as long as he has not revealed himself to us; and only in eternal life shall we see him face to face, that is, we shall gloriously understand all his mysterious counsels, which shall then rise like suns to us, while here they appear to us as vain darkness and contradiction. Therefore let us wait confidently until the time comes, and not try to solve the mystery now, for it cannot be done.

In the *Solid Declaration* it says (M. p. 598. §§ 40-42; St. L. edition p. 408): "In the Small Catechism of Dr. Luther it is written: "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him, but the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and preserved me in the right faith; just as he calls, gathers, enlightens and preserves the whole of Christendom on earth in the right united faith with Jesus Christ", etc.

This should also be practiced in schools. Proper school teachers must lay this foundation, that man does nothing for his conversion, but God does everything; then they will also train such pupils who will not allow themselves to be misled by these difficult disputations, as by the election of grace. A good confirmand, when someone comes to him who teaches the doctrine of election of grace falsely, will say: "If you say that a man must do something in order to enter heaven, I do not accept it; my school teacher has already explained to me from the third article that I cannot believe in Christ Jesus my Lord or come to him by my own reason or strength. These words of our article must be the touchstone by which we also measure the doctrine of the election of grace; as indeed a boy, when he heard a false doctrine of the election of grace, which also imputes something to man in conversion, declared that it was contrary to the words, I believe that I cannot by my own reason nor strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to Him."

It goes on to say: "And in the interpretation of the Lord's Prayer in the second petition are these words: 'How does this happen? Answer: 'When the heavenly Father gives us his Holy Spirit, that we may believe his holy Word through his grace and live godly lives' etc. — These testimonies say that we cannot come to Christ by our own efforts, but that God must give us his Holy Spirit, by which we are enlightened, sanctified and thus brought to Christ through faith and preserved with him, and that neither our will nor our cooperation is thought of."

Furthermore, in the *Solid Declaration* (M. p. 609. § 87; St. L. edition p. 415) it says: "For the conversion of our corrupt will, which is nothing other than an awakening of it from spiritual death, is the work of God alone, just as the resurrection in the bodily resurrection of the flesh is to be ascribed to God alone, as has been indicated in detail above and proven with revelatory testimonies of Holy Scripture."

This is the clearest passage in Holy Scripture against the synergists, where it says: **<AGtG 356>** "You would be dead through sin." For if a man is dead in sins, how can he do anything to become alive? But conversion is nothing other than coming to life from spiritual death.

Finally, in the *Solid Declaration* (M. p. 606 f.; [FC SD II §§ 75-78), where all synergistic heresies are rejected, it says: "2. Secondly, the gross Pelagian error that the free will, by its own natural powers, without the Holy Spirit, can convert itself to God, believe the Gospel, and obey God's law with all its heart, and with this voluntary obedience earn forgiveness of sins and eternal life. — 3. Third, the error of the papists and scholastics, who have made it a little more subtle, and have taught that man by his natural powers can make a beginning for good and for his own conversion, and that then the Holy Spirit, because man is too weak to accomplish it, comes to the aid of the good begun by his own natural powers. — 4. Fourth, the Synergist doctrine, which holds that man is not indeed dead in spiritual things, but badly wounded and half-dead, and therefore, although his free will is too weak to make a beginning and to convert himself to God by his own powers, and to obey the law of God with all his heart, yet, if the Holy Spirit makes the beginning and calls us through the gospel and offers his grace, forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation, that then the free will may meet God out of its own natural powers, and do something, however little and weakly, to help and cooperate, send and apply itself to the grace of God

and take hold of it, accept it and believe the gospel, and also cooperate in the continuation and preservation of this word from his own strength, alongside the Holy Spirit. — On the other hand, however, it has been proved at length above that such power, namely *facultas applicandi se ad gratiam*, that is, to send oneself naturally to grace, does not come from our own natural powers, but solely through the work of the Holy Spirit."

On April 20, 1577, Prince Joachim Ernst von Anhalt, who was influenced by his synergistic theologians, wrote to Landgrave Wilhelm of Hesse about the Torgau Book, the basis of the Formula of Concord: "Thus all those who are opposed to this doctrine (of the synergists of free will) and imagine an unknown predestination from some misunderstood *locis* must confess that the cause of reprobation is sin and contempt for the Word of God: therefore they must of necessity also admit the conclusion that, on the contrary, those are the elect who accept grace, and not those into whom grace is poured as into empty jars without any movement or **<AGtG 357>** consent on their part, for this enthusiasm is contrary to the analogy of Scripture and involves infinite distastefulness (*absurda*)." Further down it says: "Now we cannot find in the Torgau book that this is rightly distinguished with the same breadth, because it says that to whom God wills to be saved he gives grace to believe; then they may answer why he does not grant this to all." (Cited by Frank, Th. der Concordienf. IV, 267.)

On the other hand, Hollaz writes: "Non-malicious resistance means either the omission of a resistance which opposes the outward use of the means of grace; or the omission of a resistance which opposes the outward use of the means of grace. Resistance that opposes the inward grace of conversion. The latter omission is a matter of free will; the latter is due to divine grace, which takes away the stony heart." (*Examen theolog. P. III. s. 1. c. 1. q. 9. p. 602.*)

But our Formula of Concord also rejects the way in which Calvin wants to solve the mystery. He says that the reason why some are saved and others damned is precisely because God wants some to go to heaven and does not want others to go to heaven; he has destined some to heaven from eternity and others to hell. But that is a blasphemous doctrine. No, God has not destined anyone to damnation; he wants all men to be saved, and not one soul to perish. Now even if we cannot rhyme this, it does no harm; the Christian religion is not a religion of reason or understanding, but of faith.

It is also a real foolishness; if someone wants to be a Christian, he will say: I believe in the triune God; I believe that there is only one divine being; and yet I believe that the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God. But who wants to solve this greatest mystery with his reason? If I say to a student: The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God; how many gods are these? he will quickly have the example and say: Three. But now I say to him: No, my dear child, this is not a matter of reason, for it is written that there is only one God, and yet the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. Then the pupil says to me: But I cannot understand that; and I answer him: Neither can I; we just cannot understand that, we have to believe it.

The opponents of our doctrine of election by grace do not want to dissolve the mystery of the Holy Trinity either, they believe it as well as we do, despite their reason; but so they should also leave the mystery of election by grace. For this is what we must do with every article of faith: we must leave the mystery which it contains in itself.

Our Formula of Concord speaks (M. p. 557. §§ 17-19; St. L. ed. p. 380 f.): "Accordingly we reject the following errors: 1. As if it were taught that God does not will that all men should repent and believe the gospel. — 2. Again, when God calls us to Himself, that it is not His will that all men should come to Him. — 3. that God does not want everyone to be saved, but that he has ordained them to be condemned by the mere counsel, purpose and **<AGtG 358>** will of God, so that they cannot be saved."

The same also says (M. p. 715 ff. §§ 52-63; St. L. edition p. 484 f.): "But a special distinction must be made between what is expressly revealed and what is not revealed in God's Word; for God has still kept much of this mystery secret and hidden from us beyond what has hitherto been said and revealed in Christ, and has reserved it to His wisdom and knowledge alone, which we should not investigate, nor follow our thoughts, conclude or ponder, but keep to the revealed Word; which remembrance is most necessary.... For this is always much more to occupy our imagination than that which God has revealed in his Word, because we cannot reason it out, nor are we commanded to do so."

So God has completely forbidden us to ponder. He says: "Blessed are those who do not see and yet believe." Nor should we rhyme what we cannot rhyme. The good Lord will know how to rhyme it. Nor should we "conclude" here, that is, draw conclusions.

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The Formula of Concord continues: "So there is no doubt that God foreknew and knows in the most certain way before the time of the world which of those who are called will believe and which will not believe; item, which of the converted will remain steadfast, which will not remain steadfast; which will return after the fall, which will fall into impenitence. The number of the two is known to God without any doubt. But because God has reserved this mystery to his wisdom, and has not revealed it to us in the Word, much less commanded us to search it out in our thoughts, but earnestly restrained us from doing so, Rom. 11:33, f., we should not reason, conclude, or ponder it with our thoughts, but hold fast to his revealed Word, by which he instructs us."

When I hear about the election of grace, that God has foreseen which will be saved and which will be damned, I should not think so: If I am predestined for salvation, God knows that I will be saved, so it must follow; and if I am not elected, then it will not help me even if I repent. Therefore I will live as I desire, for thereby I will not make it worse than God knows it will be. This voice of the devil wants above all to reject the Formula of Concord and says: You should not make any conclusions; you should let God know, and not worry about the fact that God knows; you should only go the way that God has marked out for you, — period.**<AGtG 359>**

That is quite right according to reason: If the good Lord knows that I must die tomorrow, I can call together all the doctors in the world and eat and drink all the medicine in the world, I must still die. But I should not do as the Turks do, who calmly carry the plague sufferers on their backs, because they think: If I am not to die, I will not die; but if I am to die, I may do as I please, I must die. Their priests tell them: Everything is predestined by God, and everything will happen as God has ordained; therefore, do what you want, nothing can harm you. That is why these people go to war so calmly, because they think: If my hour has come, I must die, I may be in battle or sitting at home; if it has not come, all the cannons in the world may be pointed at me, but I will not die. This conclusion is, of course, quite correct in the eyes of reason, which cannot judge otherwise; but the devil reward us for questioning our reason. Our confession says: Of course God knows beforehand who will be saved and who will be damned; but because God has not revealed it to you, you must take it as if you did not know it.

The Formula of Concord continues: "So also God knows without

all doubt, and has appointed to each one the time and hour of his calling, conversion; but because this has not been revealed to us, we have commanded that we should always continue with the word, but that we should commend the time and hour to God, Act. 1:7."

This is true: if the time and hour when God wants a man to be converted has not yet come, we may do what we like, he will not be converted; but God has not revealed the hour to you, so that you do not ask about it. A preacher should therefore preach to all his hearers continually, and not think, "Oh, why do I want to preach to such and such a one? his hour may not yet have come. No, says the Formula of Concord, you should stop; God has not revealed it to you, therefore you must act as one who is not supposed to know it. Therefore stop teaching, punishing, threatening, admonishing, and leave the rest to God! So let not the hearers think: Oh, perhaps my hour is not here today, I will therefore stay at home; no, you should not think so, but you should go to church and use every little hour so that you do not miss your hour. For woe to thee if thou hast missed it! it may not return. How many a man may have lost his salvation by staying at home during the service, shunning frost, wind, rain and the heat of the sun more than God's wrath! The preacher may have told him in this very sermon what was necessary for his conversion, but he did not hear it, and so he lost the grace that God had intended for him.

We read further in the Formula of Concord: "Likewise, when we see that God gives his word in one place, does not give it in another, takes it away from one place, leaves it in another; item, one is hardened, blinded, given to a wrong mind, another, though in the same guilt, is converted again rc.In these and similar matters Paul sets us a certain goal as to how far we should go, namely, that we should recognize God's judgment in one part; for these are well-deserved punishments of sins, when God punishes the contempt of his word in a country or people in such a way that it also **<AGtG 360>** passes over to the descendants, as can be seen in the Jews; by which God shows his earnestness to his own in some countries and persons, which we all well deserve and are worthy and worthy of, because we behave badly against God's word and often grieve the Holy Spirit with difficulty; so that we may live in the fear of God, and recognize and praise God's goodness without and against our merit, in and with us, to whom he gives and leaves his word, whom he does not harden and reject."

Here is the real difficulty. Two people are equally guilty; one is converted, the other is hardened. Where does this come from? They are both equally corrupt, the same

Word of God is preached to them, who can explain this? This is the great difficulty, that we know that man can do nothing to be saved, God must do everything, and yet he who is lost is guilty himself. This is incompatible for human reason; and yet both sentences are true, irrefutably true. Some hear God's Word for many years and are not converted; the good Lord goes on and on, and at last he is converted. Another hears God's Word only a few times, is not converted, and God gives him up in hardening. Why did he allow his Word to be preached to that one for years and give him away so quickly? Our Formula of Concord says: We can do nothing but praise God's goodness in that one, but in this one we should recognize God's terrible judgment, for it is a deserved one. God demands this of us. That is why we should first of all praise God's grace in ourselves, who have been converted by God's grace. For thus our

Formula of Concord finally says: "For since our nature is corrupted by sin, worthy and guilty of God's wrath and condemnation, God owes us neither word, spirit nor grace, and if he gives it by grace, we often cast it away and make ourselves unworthy of eternal life Act. 13, 46. And such his righteous, well-blamed judgment he allows to be seen in some countries, peoples and persons, so that we, if we hold against them and compare with them, may learn to recognize and praise God's pure, undeserved grace all the more diligently in the vessels of mercy. — For those are not wronged who are punished and receive the wages of their sins; but for others, when God gives and receives his word and people are thereby enlightened, converted and preserved, God praises his pure grace and mercy without their merit. — When we walk in this article, we stay on the right path, as it is written in Hos. 3:9: 'Israel, thou art destroyed, the iniquity is thine: but my mercy is pure to save thee. — But what in this disputation wants to run too high and out of these bounds, we should put our finger on the mouth with Paulo, remember and say: 'Who are you, man, who wants to be right with God?" **<AGtG 361>**

The faithful confessors of the Formula of Concord also recognized this. Chemnitz, Selnecker and Kirchner wrote an apology of it on the orders of the Lutheran princes, just as Melanchthon wrote an apology or defense of the Augsburg Confession.

In this Apology of the Formula of Concord we read: "But when it is asked why the Lord God does not convert all men (which he certainly could) by his Holy Spirit and make them believers, etc., let the apostle also say

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"Quam *incomprehensibilia* sunt judicia ejus et *impervedigabiles* viae ejus!", but by no means attribute to God the Lord Himself the willing and real cause of the rejection or condemnation of the impenitent. But if they urge us and say: because you confess the election of the elect, you must also confess the other, namely, that in God Himself there is a cause of reprobation from eternity, even apart from sin, etc., then we say that we have no such cause. We say, then, that we are in no way minded to make God the cause of condemnation (which is not really in God, but in sin) and to ascribe to him the cause of the condemnation of the ungodly; but we want to remain with the saying of the prophet Hosea chapter 13 [Hosea 13:9], where God says: 'Israel, thou bringest thyself into trouble; thy salvation is with me alone. Nor, as we heard above from Luther, do we want to inquire about the dear God if he is hidden and has not revealed himself. For it is too high for us and we cannot comprehend it; the more we get involved in this, the further we get from the dear God and the more we doubt his most gracious will towards us. Nor does the Book of Concord deny that God does not work in all men in the same way, for there are many at all times whom he has not called through public preaching; but that we should therefore conclude to the contrary that he is a real cause of the rejection of such people, and that he has decided for himself out of mere counsel that he wants to reject them and cast them out eternally, even apart from sin, they should never persuade us to do so. For it is enough, when we come to this depth of God's mystery, to say with the apostle Romans 11: 'His judgments are unsearchable', and 1 Corinthians 15: 'We thank God, who has given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ'. What is beyond this will be revealed to us by our Savior Christ Himself in eternal life." (Apology of the Formula of Concord. Dresden, 1584. toi. 206. f.)

Chemnitz further writes: "But how is it then that Judas is not exempted, that he does not receive forgiveness of sin, since he repented of what he had done? And what is lacking in his repentance and penitence that he cannot obtain mercy? He had no faith in Christ, did not believe that God is merciful and forgives sin, and that does him harm; then where there is no faith, there is no grace from God, nor forgiveness of sin. Now our catechism says in the third article of our Christian Creed **<AGtG 362>** that man cannot believe in Jesus Christ or come to him by his own reason or strength, but that the Holy Spirit must bring him to such faith, for faith is a gift of God; how is it then that God does not give Judah such faith in his heart that he could have believed that he could be helped through Christ? Here

we must return with our questions, and say Romans 11: 'Oh, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how incomprehensible are his judgments and unsearchable his ways!' We cannot and should not search this out and delve too far into such thoughts, but use it so that we do not deliberately enter into sin and tempt God, lest God pull his hand away from us and let us sink; for where this happens, we always fall from one sin into another, and gradually slide so deeply into sin that there is no return afterwards, and we cannot reach for the state again. As it was with Judah." (Sermons on the Passion. Th. IV. p. 17. f.)

We should therefore believe God's Word with simplicity, and not fill our hearts with thoughts about God's secret counsel. Do you ask: Yes, can I not think about it? we answer: Of course you can, but who told you to think and ponder so much about what is going on in God's heart? You should not do that; that is your sin. So if you fall into temptation over this teaching, it is your own fault. For if you simply take the Bible as it reads, which says: Whoever believes in the Lord Jesus will be saved, he is the elect, and you believe in him, then you should and can say: Praise God, I believe in Christ, I will not fall away from him, I will pray to him every day that he will keep me in the faith; then I will be happy and not be troubled by the fact that there are so many things in the Bible that I cannot rhyme. No, he who is such a climber of the Spirit, as Luther says, and wants to search out the secret things, will fall from the rock and break his neck. For God will not have us to ponder his mysteries.

Finally Tim. Kirchner: "Is **God** the cause that some are condemned? Answer: By no means; for he swears and says himself that he does not desire the death of the sinner, but that he may be converted and live, Ezek. 18 Therefore we should not say that the rejection of the wicked is God's will or ordinance, but rather confess that **sin** is a cause of it, "for the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6). Answer: There is no doubt about it, if he wanted to use his omnipotence; *) [*) That God, if he willed, could convert all men by the power of his omnipotence, is denied by all modern theologians, because they think that only this is a true faith, which is man's own free act;] but that he does not do it, we have not to discuss it. Paul

writes in Romans 9 that he "shows his wrath and makes known his power and bears the vessels of wrath with great patience," etc. In those whom he allows to remain in their unbelief, he shows his righteousness and wrath against sin. He owes us nothing, but what **<AGtG 363>** he gives and does, he does out of pure grace, for the sake of Jesus Christ; we have to thank and attribute everything to him. — Since faith in Christ is a special gift of God, why does he not give it to everyone? Answer: We should save this question for eternal life, but be content with the fact that God does not want us to investigate his secret judgments, Romans 11: 'O what depth of riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are his judgments!" — But does it seem as if God is unjust that he does not give his knowledge and faith to all men, Turks, Gentiles and the impenitent? Answer: How can he be unjust, because he owes no man anything (Matthew 20) and could have let them all die in their sins! This is why the apostle Romans 9 says: 'Dear man, who are you to argue with God? God also seems to be unjust in this, that here on earth he lets the pious fare badly and the wicked well for the most part; and reason cannot fit in here at all (the gospel indicates the reason why God lays many a cross on his own here and spares glory there): so also here it seems to us that God is unjust in that he does not give all men his word and faith in Christ, and our reason cannot find its way out of this in this life. But when we come there and into that life, then we will see and understand that God is not unjust in not giving the word and faith to all men. The light of glory will then finely and easily resolve this question; which resolution we cannot, however, see in the light of grace. God's punishments and judgments on sin must be recognized just as much as His grace. All human nature is corrupted by sin; therefore God owes us nothing but forgiveness! Even though he sometimes gives his word and grace, we cast them out and make ourselves unworthy of eternal life, as Act. 13 says of the Jews. Therefore no injustice can be imputed to the Lord God in this case." (German *Enchiridion*, p. 142 f.)

63 [1880 Western District Convention essay by Walther]

## Thesis IV.

This doctrine of the election of grace does not obscure or weaken the doctrine of justification and salvation by faith, but rather reinforces and confirms it.

C.-F. 713 f. § 43. [FC SD XI 43]

Luther says concerning Matthew 5:16: "To teach and confess Christ aright is not possible without faith. As St. Paul says in 1 Cor. 12:3: "No one can call Jesus Lord without the Holy Spirit. For no false Christian, nor the spirit of a sect, can understand this teaching. How much less will he preach and confess it rightly, even if he takes the words and repeats them, but does not stick to them or leave them pure? he always preaches in such a way that he is taken for granted that he is not right; yet he smears his zeal on it, **<AGtG 364>** thereby taking away Christ's honor and giving it to himself. Therefore, this alone is the most certain work of a true Christian, when he praises and preaches Christ in such a way that people learn how they are nothing and Christ is everything." (VII, 623.)

This is most important! Indeed, it depends on whether a preacher preaches in such a way that the listeners learn that they are nothing and can do nothing, and that Christ is everything and does everything. This is the *summa summarum*, the pure, true doctrine of justification and salvation by grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ. Whoever pushes justification in such a way that the listeners are brought into their own work shamefully falsifies this doctrine, he has taken the core out of all the talk about faith and the grace of God.

And it is precisely the most zealous preachers who often do this. In their fear that the people might be lost, they want to do everything so that their listeners do not fall into the false delusion of a mere head faith; and now they disguise grace and hide the Lord Jesus from the poor sinners in such a way that they do not come to grace and do not see the Lord Jesus in all his glory. The preacher has made people anxious and full of fear as to whether they can be saved, so that they are always in doubt; but they are not cheerful and eager to do good works, because they are never sure of their state of grace and their salvation. For he who does not know that God has already unlocked heaven for him and given him eternal life does not become joyful in all good works, but remains a miserable servant of the law all his life; only now and then does he allow a so-called good work to be squeezed out of him. On the other hand, he who knows that heaven is yours, that the Lord Jesus is yours, that you can die at any moment and be saved — from such a person I can demand anything; he will do anything if he only sees that love demands it.

64 [1880 Western District Convention essay by Walther]

Why is there so much willingness to help one's neighbor in our synod? The begging letters do not stop; we are often in great embarrassment when we have to present them to our dear Christians, and think: people will finally be annoyed by our begging; and behold! it is not long before it is raining and snowing with gifts of love. This is because, by God's grace, the pure doctrine of justification by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone is so eagerly pursued and proclaimed with fervent lips. Admittedly, we have only made a faint beginning in this; if Luther already had to say that he had only gotten a taste of it, how many thousand times more must we say this! But this is a real light for us, this saying of Luther's: You must preach in such a way that people learn how they are nothing and Christ is everything.

I can therefore only teach the election of grace correctly if it is in complete agreement with this saying of Luther. As soon as such an election of grace is taught, according to which something is also placed in man, then it is false. Now we must be careful not to ascribe a work to man, for the doctrine of works has become too disreputable; but even if faith is placed in man as a motive for God, that too is wrong. **<AGtG 365>**

No, let us cheerfully confess until our death: Nothing in man has moved God to save him, but it is his grace and Christ's merit that has moved him. Again, we confess just as firmly: Let him who is condemned attribute it not to God, but to himself!

It is therefore an abominable misinterpretation of our doctrine to say that the Missourians begin by placing justification in the background behind election by grace, whereas election by grace is seldom preached among us, and rightly so. This is not a doctrine that should be practiced as predominantly as other doctrines, for it is not a doctrine that lays a foundation, but a doctrine that only gives special comfort when we are already on the way to heaven. On the contrary, precisely that in the doctrine of election of grace which coincides with the doctrine of justification is the most delicious, comforting and sweetest thing for us. This is what we always do when we speak of the election of grace and tell our listeners: "Oh dear people, you want to be saved; do not despair, God asks nothing of you, it is all grace, just come, you who are thirsty, and drink, you who are hungry, and eat, do not offer any money, you shall be saved for nothing, salvation in Christ Jesus belongs to the whole world. Do not do as the children of the world do, who pass by and yield to the lusts of the world, but do as the children of God

have always done, believe it! you will not be rapped on the knuckles if you take hold of it. For this is what the false prophets do; they are characterized by saying to those who hunger for grace: This and that must first take place in you before you are in a state in which you may grasp grace; whereas the one who knows that he is lost with his sins is in the right state to grasp the grace that is offered to him through the gospel, and we call out to him: You cannot grasp it quickly enough.

Thus the Formula of Concord (M. p. 713. § 43; St. L. ed. p. 483): "And inasmuch as the mystery of providence is revealed to us in the Word of God, and if we abide by it and keep to it, it is a useful, salutary, comforting doctrine; for it powerfully confirms the article that we are justified and saved without all our works and merits, purely by grace, for Christ's sake alone; For before the world was, before we were, even before the foundation of the world was laid, when we could do no good, we were chosen to salvation by grace in Christ according to the purpose of God, Rom. 9:11. 2 Tim. 1:9."

There is no doctrine in the Scriptures that confirms the doctrine of justification more, that makes it brighter and clearer, than the doctrine of election by grace. For if it is true that those who are saved have been destined for it from eternity, and that God has at the same time decided to convert them, bring them to faith and keep them in faith to the end, despite the fact that he has seen nothing good in them, what can confirm the doctrine of justification more than this? For if God has already from eternity intended our salvation, it must be free grace that we can boast of nothing ourselves, so that we cannot say: But I have also let it cost me something to get to heaven. No, we have made work for the Lord, [Is. 43:24], he has paid something to save us, namely his blood of God. We must therefore give Him alone all honor and glory.

19 [1882 Western District Convention essay, by C. F. W. Walther] ^

***[Part 1**: Intro, Thesis I, 1. — **Part 2**: Thesis I, 2., Thesis II. — **Part 3**: Thesis III., Thesis IV]*

# Doctrinal Proceedings.

[Intro (p. 19) – Thesis I (p. 22 (1., 2.) – Thesis II – Thesis III – Thesis IV]

For a decade, our district has been dealing with a series of theses on the subject: "That only through the doctrine of the Lutheran Church is all glory given to God alone, irrefutable proof that its doctrine is the only true one." The third of these theses lists 12 doctrines that are intended to show that only the Lutheran Church truly gives all glory to God alone. Now that this has been done in previous years with regard to the first 9 and the 12th of these doctrines , the 10th, namely that concerning the invocation and worship of God, is before us for the current sessions.

John Gerhard has demonstrated in an entire book that all churches except the Lutheran Church often take away God's glory with their doctrine. In this book, he writes the following words of wisdom in the introduction:

> "A truly golden and highly worthy apostolic rule for daily reflection is: 'Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all for the glory of God.' (1 Cor. 10:31) … God himself directs all his works to the honor of his divine name and to the glory of his majesty, since he is the highest good, the ultimate end and the center of all things, the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last. As it says in Prov. 16:4: “The Lord does everything for his own sake,” and according to Eph. 1:4-6, God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, to the praise of his glorious grace. He created the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them for the purpose that his goodness, wisdom, and power might be known and praised by rational creatures. (Rom. 1:20.) Therefore, the seraphim sing: “All lands are full of his glory.” (Isa. 6:3.) He has redeemed the human race, which had fallen into sin, through the Son, the Mediator, to the praise of his abundant mercy, therefore the angels sing at Christ's birth: “Glory to God in the highest!” (Luke 2:14). He calls us through the Word, rebirths, renews, enlightens, justifies, and makes us glorious and blessed for the glory of His name (Eph. 3:16, Col. 1:27); therefore the whole choir of angels and elect in heaven praise his glory and honor for all eternity (Ps. 34:4; Rev. 4:9; 5:12–13; 19:1, etc.). It is therefore right and just that we ourselves also direct all our thoughts, words, and deeds to the glory of God, our Creator, Redeemer, and Savior; as it is written in Malachi 1:6: "A son shall honor his father, and a servant his master. Am I now a father, where is my honor? Am I a master, where is the fear of me?

says the Lord of hosts. Just as in all things we must first and foremost consider and seek the glory of God and then the edification of our neighbor, so too in the interpretation of Scripture everything must be directed toward this purpose and this goal. ... Any doctrine (*dogma*) that damages the honor of God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, who is of the same essence and throne as Him, and that of the Holy Spirit, is therefore not sound and genuine; and every community that harbors and stubbornly defends false doctrines that damage God's glory is not the true church, even if it is painted with a color of twisted and misunderstood scriptures. Therefore, when a sharp dispute arose between Christ and the Jews about the truth of the church, namely, which of the two parties could rightly claim it, Christ referred, among other things, to this peculiarity of his teaching, that it was directed toward the honor of the heavenly Father, which was violated by the Jewish fabrications, saying, "I honor my Father. ' (John 8:49). From this supreme principle we conclude as follows: Any communion that harbors and stubbornly defends false doctrines that undermine the honor of God and his Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit is not the true, pure, and uncorrupted Church. The papal, Calvinist, and Photinian communions stubbornly hold and defend false doctrines that undermine the honor of God and his Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the papal, Calvinist, and Photinian communions are not the true, pure, and uncorrupted church. — Now, in order to prove the truth of the second proposition, we will begin with the papal communion and show that they undermine the honor of God and his Son Jesus Christ, as well as that of the Holy Spirit, through their doctrinal distortions. … Although they profess with us the unity of the divine essence in words, they indirectly undermine it (*oblique*) when they show divine worship, which belongs to God alone, to creatures. ... That in the papacy the deceased saints are invoked is too well known to require proof." (*Disputatt. theol. partes tres. Jenae* 1655. p. 1—4.)

Yes, God's glory is the highest thing that man has to seek. God himself does all his works — creation, election, redemption, calling, sanctification, glorification — for the praise of his glorious name: and should we, his creatures and redeemed ones, not have the same goal in mind in our deeds and words, but above all in our doctrines of faith? Therefore, if any interpretation of Scripture, any doctrine, does not promote God's glory but attacks and robs Him of it, then it is thereby marked as false. Of course, one must not judge here according to

blind reason or the dreams of one's own heart which doctrine gives glory to God. God's Word alone can decide that. Otherwise, we might end up like Calvin and Beza, who, based precisely on the principle “Glory to God alone!”, but following their own reason, constructed a system that took all glory away from God.

For further discussion of the subject, the speaker, Dr. Walther, presented five theses, which (except for the last half of the fourth and the fifth) were discussed and accepted by the synod. They read as follows:

**That only through the doctrine of the Lutheran Church is all glory given to God alone is evident, tenth, from its doctrine on the invocation and worship of God.**

**Thesis I.**

[pp. 21-43]

Our church teaches that only the true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is to be invoked and worshipped; not Mary, not the deceased saints, in a word, no creature.

**Thesis II.**

[pp. 44-54]

Our church teaches that Christ, God and man in one person, is to be invoked and worshipped, not his divinity alone.

**Thesis III.**

[pp. 54-62]

Our church teaches that only those prayers are pleasing to God and will be answered which are based solely on God's command and promise and are made in the name of Jesus, but that even the faintest sigh of faith is precious to God and will certainly be answered.

**Thesis IV.**

[pp. 62-71]

Our church teaches that grace is obtained not through the prayers of man, but solely through the Word and the Holy Sacraments, and that therefore prayer is neither a meritorious work nor a means of grace, but an exercise of faith for those who are already in grace, to recognize and obtain God's gifts of grace and all other good gifts of God.

**Thesis V.**

[not covered in this essay]

Our church teaches that the highest model of all prayers is the prayer of our Lord, or the sacred Lord's Prayer; therefore, it also teaches that it should be used most diligently.

22 [1882 Western District Convention essay by Walther]

**Thesis I.** ^

(1., 2.)

**Our church teaches that only the true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is to be invoked and worshipped; not Mary, not the deceased saints, in a word, no creature.**

The first thesis highlights the first reason from the Lutheran Church's doctrine on the invocation and worship of God, which proves that it also gives God alone all honor in this matter. For the purpose of our discussion, it will be good to divide this thesis into the following two parts:

1. All invocation of any creature is contrary to the honor of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as the one true God. [pp. 22-34]

2. All invocation of any creature is contrary to the honor of Christ, as the one mediator and intercessor.[pp. 34-43]

1. ^

[pp. 22-34]

According to Holy Scripture, prayer is an act of worship which God therefore desires should be offered to no one but Himself. “I, the Lord, that is my name; and I will not give my glory to another, nor my praise to idols,” the Almighty calls out to his apostate people in Isaiah 42:8. In Matthew 4:10-11, Christ quotes Deuteronomy 6:13: “You shall worship the Lord your God and serve him alone”; to reinforce this Old Testament commandment, Christ, the authentic interpreter, adds the word “alone.” However, this word is also found in this context in the Old Testament. For in 1 Samuel 7:3 it says: “Set your hearts on the Lord and serve him alone.” This also includes all the passages where angels and humans decisively rejected worship as an honor due to God alone. Revelation 19:10; Acts 10:25-26.

It is indeed almost inexplicable how the Papists can hold fast to their worship of saints, since the Holy Scriptures testify so clearly and expressly that all worship of any creature is idolatry. To justify it, they (like all false teachers) make a distinction between the words used in the Greek original text for “worship” and “serve.” The word “serve” for the Greek word *latreuein* is, of course, used only for the service of God, while the word “worship” for the Greek words *proskynein* and *duleuein* is also used for the service or worship to be rendered to human beings. Thus, they believe they have escaped the passage in Matthew 4:10-11, where Christ uses the Greek word *latreuein* in the sentence, “And serve him alone.” However, the application of this distinction by the papists is mere sophistry. Scripture does indeed speak

of “worship” (*proskynein*) of men (cf. 1 Kings 1:16, 31; 2:19); but it is immediately apparent that “worship” here is a civil courtesy, as was customary in the East. The Greek word *proskynein* and the Hebrew *hischtachavah*, which is translated with the German word “anbeten” (to worship),, actually mean to bow down to the ground, and this is what Easterners do before their gods in order to worship them divinely, but before humans only to greet them politely and reverently. However, it is obvious that this is not the meaning in which the Papists speak of worship, veneration, and service of the saints. Their veneration of the saints is not civil, but religious, that is, a veneration through which they give to the creature the honor that is due to the Creator alone. — In addition, in Matthew 4:10-11, Christ clearly uses “worship” and “serve” (*proskynein* and *latreuein*) as synonyms, so that the little word “alone” refers not only to “serve” but also to “worship.”

Adam Osiander writes the following about the papist distinction that the Greek word *latreia* means to serve God alone, but *douleia* also means to serve humans:

> “The papists object: In the passage cited” (Matthew 4) "the word *latreia* occurs, not *douleia*, so only the former is denied to creatures ... Answer: We allow the distinction between *latreia* and *douleia*, namely, if *latreuein* is to mean religious worship, but *douleia* civil worship. But this does not help the Papists in their invocation of the saints, because according to them, *douleia* is a religious worship. On the other hand, although the word *latreuein* is used in Matthew 4:10, it is clear that *douleia* is also included, because (1) in Matthew 4, the devil does not desire the highest worship, but a lesser one, namely *douleia*, for he says in Luke 4:6: " Worship me, etc., for all things have been delivered unto me.' He therefore does not want to be worshipped as the supreme lord, but as a vassal. (2) In Holy Scripture, *latreuein* and *douleuein* are used in the same way and no distinction is made between higher and lesser worship, as in Deuteronomy 6, from which Christ's words are taken, a common expression is read for both words (*abad* = to serve). Christ therefore does not use the word *latreia* in contrast to *douleia*.“ (*Colleg. System, th. V, 360 sq*.)

The first commandment already shows us that it is idolatry to worship any creature. God says to mankind: ”I am the Lord your God!" That is to say: “I am and no other.” And then he immediately adds: “You shall have no other gods before me. Do not worship them and do not serve them.” So if I worship the creature, it is another god to me besides God. This prohibition puts the papist distinction between *douleia* and *latreia* to shame. For here, the word used for “worship” (to bow down, to prostrate oneself on the ground)

is interpreted by the Papists as referring to the service due to the saints.

Consider this further: if the worship of saints were not to be equated with the worship of God, it would have to be commanded in the second table. But the papists find it in the other commandment, that is, in the first table; so no matter how stubbornly they deny that their *douleia* is idolatry, they nevertheless give to the creature the honor that God will allow no other to have.

How easily Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego could have escaped the threatened punishment if they had wanted to take advantage of the papist distinction between *latreia* and *douleia*! According to papist opinion, they could have bowed down before Nebuchadnezzar's idol without committing the slightest idolatry. But why did they not do so? Because they knew that this was a religious cult, and that not even the slightest bit of it should be given to any creature without falling into the sin of idolatry.

It is therefore truly the teaching of Scripture that only those who direct their prayers solely to the true God give all honor to God alone; that, on the other hand, those who show honor to any creature rob God of the honor that is due to Him and are therefore idolaters.

Does the **Lutheran Church**, with its doctrine on prayer, give this honor to God? — The tone in which the Confessions of our church combat the papist abomination of saint worship varies greatly. The irenic Augsburg Confession speaks very mildly on this subject; its Apology is already sharper; until finally Luther strikes with a thunderous axe in the Smalcald Articles. But those initial mild punishments did not in any way deny the teaching of Scripture. But let us hear the confessions themselves. [Walther clearly shows Luther's writing as the gold standard.]

The Augsburg Confession states in Article 21:

> "Our people teach that we should remember the saints in order to strengthen our faith when we see how grace has been bestowed upon them and how they have been helped through faith; and that we should take example from their good works, each according to his calling, just as the Emperor may follow the example of David in waging war against the Turks, for both are in royal office, which requires the protection and defense of their subjects. However, it cannot be proven from Scripture that one should invoke the saints or seek help from them, for there is only one mediator and reconciler between God and man, Jesus Christ, 1 Tim. But it cannot be proven from Scripture that one should **call upon** the saints or seek help from them; for there is only one mediator and intercessor between God and man, Jesus Christ, 1 Tim. 2:5-6, who is the only Savior, the only high priest, mercy seat, and intercessor before God, Rom. 8:34. And he alone has promised that he will hear our prayers [John 14:13].

This is also the highest form of worship according to Scripture, that one should seek and call upon the same Jesus Christ with all one's heart in all needs and concerns." (Article XXI)

Melanchthon could not have been more subtle. His main objection to the worship of saints is that it is not commanded in Scripture. Indirectly, however, he already implies here that it is basically idolatry. He is more explicit in his language in the

Apology of the Augsburg Confession:

"Even if the saints pray for the church, it does not follow that one should invoke the saints. Although our confession only states this, there is nothing in Scripture about invoking the saints or seeking help from them. If one cannot produce either a commandment, a promise, or an example from Scripture, it follows that no heart or conscience can rely on it. For since every prayer must be made in faith, how can I know that God is pleased with the invocation of the saints if I do not have God's Word for it? How can I be sure that the saints hear my prayer and the prayer of each individual? Some make the saints into gods and say that they can know our thoughts and see into our hearts. … We repeat what we said before: God's Word, Scripture, does not say that the saints understand our invocations, and even if they did understand them, that God is pleased with such invocations; there is no basis for this. The opponents cannot argue against this; therefore, the opponents should not force or urge us to do uncertain things, for a prayer without faith is not a prayer. For although they say that the church has this custom, it is certain that this is a new custom in the church; for the old collections, even if they commemorate the saints, do not invoke the saints." (Art. XXI. 10-13;)

The main passage for this, however, is found in the
Smalcald Articles. There Luther says:

"Invoking the saints is also one of the **Antichrist's** abuses, and contradicts the first main article and erases the knowledge of Christ [Philippians 3:8], is neither commanded nor advised, has no example in Scripture, and we have a thousand times better in Christ, even if that were a precious good, which it is not. And although the angels in heaven pray for us (as Christ himself also does) [Romans 8:34], so do the saints on earth, or perhaps also in heaven [Revelation 6:9-10]: it does not follow from this that we should invoke the saints, worship them [Revelation 22:8-9], fast, celebrate, hold Mass for them, sacrifice for them, build churches, altars, and places of worship for them, and serve them in other ways, and consider them helpers in times of need and divide all kinds of help among them

> and assign a special one to each, as the papists teach and do. For that is idolatry, and such honor belongs to God alone. For you, as a Christian and saint on earth, can intercede for me not in one but in all needs. But therefore I shall not worship you, call upon you, celebrate you, fast for you, or sacrifice to you. I shall not hold Mass in your honor or place my faith in you for salvation. I can otherwise honor you, love you, and thank you in Christ. If such idolatrous honor is removed from the angels and dead saints, the other honor will be without harm, and indeed will soon be forgotten. For where benefit and help, both physical and spiritual, can no longer be hoped for, they will leave the saints in peace, both in the grave and in heaven; for no one will remember, respect, or honor them much for nothing or out of love." (SA II II 25-28).

But what do the papists teach? As has been said, they deny to Lutherans that their veneration of saints is a religious cult; they portray it as innocent reverence that is owed to such steadfast, courageous confessors of the faith as the deceased saints have been. But if we look at what the so-called Catholic Church said at the Council of Trent, where its doctrine was established, we hear the following: "The holy council commands all bishops and others who have the teaching office and pastoral care to... carefully instruct the faithful above all about the intercession and invocation of the saints... and teach them how the saints, who reign with Christ, offer their intercessions for men to God, and that it is good and useful to invoke them humbly“ (so that is the whole ”careful" instruction! We find no word about what kind of invocation this should and should not be; whether it has a basis in Scripture or not, the “holy church council” says just as little; only that it is “good and useful”), “and,” it continues, “to obtain blessings from God through his Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, who is our only Redeemer and Savior, to take refuge in their intercession, **help**, and **assistance**” (Behold the glittering sheep's clothing of the ravenous wolf! With the “only Redeemer and Savior,” they give the appearance of wanting to give all glory to Christ, while immediately pointing to the intercession, help, and assistance of the saints) — "but those who deny that the saints enjoying eternal bliss in heaven may be invoked, or who claim... their invocation, so that they may also intercede for each one of us (*pro nobis etiam singulis*), is idolatry, or that this contradicts the Word of God and contradicts the honor of Jesus Christ, the only mediator between God and man, or

that it is foolish to implore those who reign in heaven with words or in spirit (*mente!*)." So they believe that the saints can also see into the hearts of men and hear their sighs and desires—a privilege that God so often reserves for Himself in Scripture. Thus, the Council of Trent not only sanctioned the invocation of saints, but also cursed all those who teach otherwise with the words: “But if anyone teaches or believes anything contrary to these decrees, let him be anathema,” that is, cursed. (*Sess. 25. De invocat. etc*.)

How the papists now practice this doctrine of theirs may be seen from the following: In the Middle Ages, the Psalms were rewritten as prayers addressed to Mary, and such collections were therefore called Marian Psalters. The first psalm in the psalter attributed to the scholastic Bonaventura (died 1274) reads as follows:

> "Blessed is the man who delights in your name, O Virgin Mary; your grace will strengthen his soul. Like a sign watered by springs, he will bear the richest fruits of righteousness. Blessed art thou among women for the humility and faithfulness of thy heart. For thou art superior to all women in the beauty of thy flesh, and thou surpassest the angels and archangels in the excellence of thy holiness. Thy mercy and thy grace are praised everywhere; God hath blessed the works of thy hands. Ave Maria," etc. (Quoted by Chemnitz in his *Examination of the Council of Trent*. Ed. Genev. f. 595.)

The 19th Psalm begins with the words: “The heavens declare your glory, O Virgin Mary.” (*L. c. f. 596*. 596.) The 31st Psalm reads: "In you, O Mistress, I have hoped, let me never be put to shame; accept me into your grace; incline your ears to me and rejoice me in my sorrow. You are my strength and my refuge, my comfort and my protection; to you I cried when my heart was troubled, and you heard me from the summit of the eternal heights. Into your hands, O Mistress, I commend my spirit, my whole life, my last day." (*L. c. f.*. 597.) The words of the 51st Psalm are changed as follows: "Have mercy on me, O Mistress, you who are called the Mother of Mercy, and according to the depths of your mercy, cleanse me of all my sins. Pour out your grace upon me and do not take your customary goodness away from me. For I confess my sins to you and accuse myself before you for my crimes. Reconcile me with the fruit of your womb and make peace between me and the one who created me.“ (*L. c. f.* 596.) ”In the Prague Marian Rosarium, published in 1669, on page 209, Mary is invoked with the words: ‘Command the Son to be gracious to us.’" (*L. c.*)

But even that was not enough. They did not hesitate to turn even the holy Our Father into an “Our Mother” prayer.

Calov writes:

> "Here we must not conceal the recent blasphemous reversal of the Lord's Prayer by a certain Dörffel, which appeared in Prague in 1653 with public approval: 'Our Mother, who art in heaven, O Mary! Praised be you and your name by all generations of mankind; may your virtues and graces come to us; may the desire of your heart be done, as in heaven, so also on earth; our daily bread, Jesus, obtain for us today and on the day of our death through the sacrament; and pray for our sins, as we pray for our offenders; and lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from all evil and sin, through Jesus, your beloved Son, our Lord, Amen." (*System. Tom. XI. p. 92. sq.*)

Truly, idolatry cannot be practiced in a more abominable manner. If the Roman Church had no other abomination than this, we would have to flee from it like the plague for the sake of this one abomination alone. All its religious services are nothing but vain idolatry. This is the wine of fornication with which, according to the prophecy of Revelation, Antichrist has made the whole world drunk.

However, here are a few more passages from the private writings of papal theologians.

Bellarmine says of the power of the saints: “That they (the saints) are not only powerful, but omnipotent, who can rightly deny this?” (*Conc. IV. de beatitud. coelest.* p. 411. Quoted by Gerhard in *Conf. cath. f.* 994.)

Cornelius von Stein: “According to Philemon 4, we have the same faith in all saints as we have in the Lord.” (*Comment. in Ep. ad Philemon*. v. 4. Quoted *ibid.*)

Cassander: “The saints are not absent from us, because they follow the Lamb wherever he goes. Rev. 14:4.” (*Confutt. lat. 21. p.* 964. Quoted in loc.) Obviously, this refers to a figurative following, as in Matt. 16:24. But Cassander uses this passage to attribute a certain omnipresence to the saints!

Bellarmin leaves it undecided how the saints hear the prayers and sighs addressed to them. But he states just as decisively: “Although there may be doubt as to how they (the saints) recognize what is absent and what is sometimes brought forth only by the impulse of the heart, it is nevertheless certain that they recognize it.” (*Lib. I. de beat, sanet, c.* 20. Quoted in loc. cit.)

Other papist theologians explain this in a different way. On this subject,

29 [1882 Western District Convention essay by Walther]

Hollaz writes:

"The papists argue: 1. That the saints see creatures, and therefore our prayers, clearly and distinctly in God's essence as in a mirror. 2. That God reveals our sighs to them. I answer to 1.: By virtue of their blessed vision, the blessed see what is actually and immediately (*formaliter*) in God; but they do not recognize what is in God indirectly (*virtualiter*) and in a special way (*eminenter*). To 2. I reply: If God reveals our prayers and sighs to the saints, how then do the deceased saints bring our prayers before God?" (*Exam. p*. 1219.)

Quenstedt summarizes all the reasons against invoking the saints as follows:

"The saints who have died in the Lord are not to be invoked and worshipped religiously, devoutly, and confidently... The first proof for this orthodox opinion is taken from that which is exclusively God's own: what belongs to the true God alone cannot and must not be attributed to the saints; the cult (service) of religious invocation belongs to the true God alone: thus. — The above proposition is proven from Isa. 42:8 and 48:11. The subordinate clause is illuminated by Deuteronomy 6:13 and Matthew 4:10. Those who worship the saints religiously transfer the honor that belongs to God alone to something else that is outside of God, and thus commit idolatry. The second proof is taken from the silence of Holy Scripture. All true invocation is based on a divine commandment and a divine promise; if an invocation lacks this foundation, it is condemned as a self-chosen form of worship, Deut. 12:8, 32; 17:3. Psalm 116:38. Isaiah 1:12. 29:13. Ezekiel 20:18-19. Micah 6:6. f. Zechariah 7:5. Matthew 15:9. Mark 7:7. Col. 2:23. But now Eck himself admits in his handbook, chapter 15, that “the invocation of saints is not expressly commanded in Holy Scripture.” The papal deputies at the Diet of Augsburg confessed the same thing, according to Chyträus' *History of the Augsburg Confession*, p. 254. Hebrews 13:7 requires us to devote a grateful and joyful remembrance to their name, memory, end, and change, as well as to imitate their faith and godliness; but the passage says nothing about invocation and religious veneration. Indeed, the Papists count the invocation of saints among the unwritten traditions, e.g., Pererius, Tanner, and others. Bellarmine says: ‘the veneration of saints began not so much by law as by custom’ (Book 1 of *The Salvation of the Saints*, Chapter 8). Finally, the Council of Trent itself does not refer here to Scripture, but to the practice of the Church. We therefore conclude that any invocation that is not based on faith in a certain and explicit Word of God is null and void; but the invocation of saints is not based on

faith in a certain and explicit commandment of God; therefore, it is null and void. Furthermore, invocation must be based on the promise of being heard, Ps. 50:15, 91:15, 138:3, 145:18, Joel 2:32, Matt. 7:7, 18:19, Luke 18:7. But there is no promise of an answer to the saints; indeed, Salmeron admits, Tom. 10, p. 468, that 'the saints are not always heard'. The third proof is taken from the lack of an example in Scripture. No proven example of pious people from Scripture can be cited who would have invoked the dead. The papists themselves claim that in the Old Testament the departed were not invoked because they were still in limbo (in a kind of antechamber to hell);... but in the New Testament there is likewise no example, as Eck acknowledges in the cited passage and Cassander in his consultation, Article 21. Every invocation pleasing to God must, however, be in accordance with the example of the saints and not contrary to the right invocation of the true apostolic church. The fourth proof is taken from the necessary qualities of those who are invoked. Whom we invoke religiously must be omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, and we must believe in him and hope in him; now the saints are not omnipresent, not omnipotent, not omniscient, and we do not believe in them and do not hope in them; thus the superior proposition is clear. That the one who is invoked is omnipresent is taught in Deut. 4:7, Ps. 91:15, 145:18, and Isa. 55:6. The prophet Elijah therefore mocks the prayers of the priests of Baal because the Baal who is invoked is not present. That He is all-knowing and a judge of hearts is emphasized in 1 Kings 18:27, Ps. 18:7, 38:10, 79:11. That he is and must be almighty (so that he can come to our aid in our need) is shown in various places in Scripture; see Psalm 46:1-2; 62:10-11, etc. That we must believe and hope in the one we call upon is taught by the Apostle in Romans 10:14: "How can they call on him in whom they have not believed?" The truth of the premise is not doubtful, since God alone is the knower of hearts, alone present everywhere, alone almighty, so that He can hear and answer. And since Paul's principle that we should only call upon those in whom we believe (Romans 10:14) is irrefutable, I do not see how it can be said that the saints and angels should be called upon without them thereby becoming the cornerstone and object of our faith. But how much this is contrary to Scripture will become clear to everyone when they read Jeremiah 17:5: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the Lord." That one and the same object of worship is found in the Ten Commandments and in the Apostles' Creed, as well as in the Lord's Prayer and in Baptism, is evident from the

juxtaposition of these main elements of religion... But now, in the Ten Commandments and in the Apostles' Creed, as well as in the Lord's Prayer and in Baptism, there is no other object of worship besides God, cf. Luke 11:12-13; Matthew 6:9. Hence the saying attributed to Celestine († 432): “The law to pray is the law to believe and to do.” The fifth proof is taken from the ignorance of the saints. Those who do not know our shortcomings, our personal needs, worries, sighs, and inner supplications are called upon in vain; but the saints in heaven do not know our shortcomings, etc.; thus. — Here, however, a distinction must be made between general and special knowledge, as well as between the memory of the past and the knowledge of the present. Thus, that rich man took the memory of his five brothers with him, etc. Although the blessed ones generally know something about the condition of the militant church with which they once fought under the banner of the cross, and therefore pray for the church in general, they do not know the specifics, the personal needs, sorrows, sighs, and heartfelt prayers of each individual. That nothing can therefore be demanded of those who have departed from this life is clear from 1) clear testimonies, Job 14:21: “He knows not whether his children are honored, or whether they are despised.” Ecclesiastes 9:5: “The living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing.” Isaiah 63:16: “Abraham does not know us, and Israel does not recognize us.” 2 Kings 22:20: “Therefore I will gather you to your fathers, that you may be gathered to your grave in peace, and your eyes shall not see all the evil that I will bring upon this place.” 2) From the constant joy of the blessed, 2 Kings 22:19-20; Isaiah 65:17, 18; Revelation 21:4. Thus, the hardships of their descendants are unknown to them, as these would disturb their joy. The sixth proof is taken from the uncertainty of invocation. The invocation of the saints is uncertain and dubious in many ways, for often those are invoked of whom it is not sufficiently known whether they ever lived, or, if they lived, whether they were truly saints, whether they are in heaven or are being tormented in hell; since those who are included in the number of the blessed by one pope are sometimes excluded by another. In short, the religious invocation of the saints is based on an uncertain and highly dubious principle, namely human traditions, and fabulous ones at that, and derives its origin from the superstitious schools of the pagans. The seventh proof is taken from the authority of the Synod of Paris (of the year 825), which was held under Louis the Pious and Lothair, which forbade the invocation of saints, on the authority of Lactantius,

> Fulgentius, and Ambrose, and decreed that they should be venerated solely through love, not through any obligatory service. The eighth proof is taken from the consensus of the Holy Fathers. J. Dalläus has shown that the oldest theologians up to the 4th century knew of no other religious worship than that which belongs solely and exclusively to God. Jerome rightly says to Vigilantius: "Who, O foolish head, has worshipped the martyrs, who has believed that a man is a god?" (*Theol. didact.-polem. P. 10. c. 11. s. 2. q. 4. f. 1442. 1445 ff.*.)

Because the Papists refer to the tradition of the early Church for everything they cannot prove from Scripture, the last two pieces of evidence are also of considerable importance, namely that in 825 a great synod forbade the invocation of saints, and that until the fourth century no one had any idea of such a thing. In the weekly prayers of our *Treasury of Prayers* [*Gebets-Schatz*], there is a request that God may give us the grace to lead a life that pleases him and all the elect in heaven. This passage is sometimes understood as if the perfected ones really knew something about our lives. But that is not what this passage means at all. Rather, it means that God will give us His grace to live a life that would please all the elect who are already in heaven if it were presented to them for examination, in a word, a truly holy life; for only such a life would gain the approval of the elect.

Finally, in his "Preface to the Prophets," Luther compares the idolatrous invocation of saints by the papists with the idolatry of the Israelites. The incomparably beautiful passage in which Luther also gives a clear teaching on what idolatry is reads as follows:

> "Because the prophets mostly cry out against idolatry, it is necessary to know what form their idolatry took. For among us, under the papacy, many are very gentle and think that they are not as idolatrous as the children of Israel. Therefore, they do not hold the prophets in high regard, especially in this matter, as they are not concerned with their punishment for idolatry. They are far too pure and holy to engage in idolatry, and it would be ridiculous for them to fear and be frightened by the threats and rebukes concerning idolatry. Just as the people of Israel did, refusing to believe that they were idolatrous, and the prophets' threats had to be lies and they had to be condemned as heretics. Such great saints were not the children of Israel, that they would have worshipped wood and stones, especially the kings, princes, priests, and prophets, who were most idolatrous. But this was their idolatry, that they abandoned the worship of God, which was instituted and ordained in Jerusalem (and where God wanted it more),

and improved, instituted, and arranged elsewhere out of their own devotion and conceit, without God's command, and invented other new ways, persons, and times for it, which Moses had strictly forbidden them (especially Deut. 12:4, 8), and always pointing them to the place that God had chosen for his tabernacle and dwelling place. Such false devotion was their idolatry, and they thought it was delightful, and relied on it as if they had done well; yet it was pure disobedience and apostasy from God and his command. Thus we read in 1 Kings 12:28 that Jeroboam did not merely set up the two calves, but also had the people preached to: “You shall no longer go up to Jerusalem, but behold, Israel, here is your God who brought you out of Egypt.” He does not say, “Behold, Israel, this is your calf,” but “this is your God who brought you out of Egypt.” He freely confesses that the God of Israel is the true God and the one who brought them out of Egypt, but one should not go up to Jerusalem to worship Him, but rather find Him here in Dan and Bethel at the golden calves. So that the opinion was: one could sacrifice and serve God both before the golden calves and before a holy sign of God, just as one served and sacrificed to God in Jerusalem before the golden ark. Behold, that means abandoning the worship of God in Jerusalem and denying God, who commanded such worship, as if He had not commanded it. And so they built on their own works and devotion, and not on God alone. With such devotion, they filled the land with idolatry on all the mountains, in all the valleys, under all the trees, building altars, sacrificing, and burning incense; and yet everything had to be called serving the God of Israel; anyone who said otherwise was a heretic and a false prophet. For that is what idolatry actually means: performing a religious service without God's command, out of one's own devotion. For he wants us to be untaught as to how to serve him. He wants to teach us and guide us; his word should be there to enlighten and guide us. Without His Word, everything is idolatry and vain lies, no matter how devout and beautiful it may seem... From this it follows that among us Christians, all those who have invented new forms of worship or still practice them without God's command and commandment, out of their own devotion and (as they say) good intentions, are idolatrous and truly deserve the prophet's rebuke. For in doing so, they certainly place their trust in their own chosen works and not solely and purely in Jesus Christ. These are called ‘adulterers’ by the prophets, who are not content with their husband, Christ, but run after others, as if Christ alone could not help us without us and our works, or as if He alone had not redeemed us, but we also had to do our part. Yet we know full well that we have done nothing

to deserve that he died for us and took our sins upon Himself and bore them on the cross, not only before the whole world could consider such a thing, but also before we were born... Therefore, it does not help our clergy to pretend that they serve no idols in their churches and monasteries, but only God the Lord. For you hear here that it is not enough to say and think: I do it to honor God; I mean the true God; again: I want to serve the one God: because all idolaters say and mean the same thing. It is not a matter of opinion or belief, otherwise those who martyred the apostles and Christians would also be servants of God; for they also believed (as Christ says in John 16:2) that they were doing God a service; and St. Paul in Romans 10:2 testifies to the Jews that they “zealously serve God”; and in Acts 26:7 he says that they hope to attain the promised salvation through worship day and night. — But let each one see to it that he is certain that his worship is founded on God's Word and not invented or well-intentioned out of his own devotion. For whoever practices worship that has no testimony from God should know that he is not serving the true God, but his own invented idol, that is, his conceit and false thoughts, and thus the devil himself, and all the words of the prophets are against him. For there is no such God who would allow us to establish worship according to our own choice and devotion, without his command and word; but there is only one God who, through His Word, has abundantly established and commanded all kinds of orders and worship in which he wants to be served. We should remain with this and not deviate to the right or to the left, neither doing more nor less, neither making it worse nor better. Otherwise, there will be no end to idolatry, and no distinction can remain between what is true worship and what is idolatry, because they all mean the true God and all use his true name. To the same one God be thanks and praise through Jesus Christ, his Son and our Lord, blessed forever, Amen." (*Preface to the Prophets* from 1532. XIV, 41-48 [StL 14, 32-41; AE 35:265-73])

2. ^

[All invocation of any creature is contrary to the honor of Christ, as the one mediator and intercessor.]

Just as invoking any creature first robs the Triune God of the honor of His divinity, so, according to our first thesis, it also robs Christ of the honor that He alone is the Mediator.

For Holy Scripture teaches 1) that Christ is the only mediator between God and man, the only high priest, representative, and intercessor. 1 Tim. 2:5: “There is one God and **one** mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.” 1 John 2:1–2: “And if anyone sins, we have an

advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, who is righteous." Romans 8:34: "Who shall condemn? Christ is here, who died, yes, rather, who was also raised, who is at the right hand of God and intercedes for us." John 14:6: "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me."

So what devil has inspired the papacy to say that in times of spiritual distress one should take refuge in the saints instead of in Christ, who is after all the mediator appointed by God and the only way to the Father's heart? —

Holy Scripture teaches 2) that part of our Savior's work of redemption is that we now have free and confident access to God. Romans 5:1–2: "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we stand." Eph. 2:18: "Through Him we both (Jews and Gentiles) have access in one Spirit to the Father." Heb. 4:15-16: "Therefore (because we have such a high priest) let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace."

What devil has now inspired the papacy to tell Christians: You may not appear before God, for he is a consuming fire. Go to the saints; they are kind and will represent your cause before God? Who does not see that through this antichristian abomination the whole blessed, eternally praiseworthy work of redemption of Christ is denied, through which God is reconciled with men and has become their dear, faithful Father, who sees nothing condemnable in those who appear before him clothed in Christ's blood and righteousness, but only good and holy things?

Holy Scripture teaches 3) that the Son of God became a man, and indeed such a poor man, precisely for this reason, that He allowed Himself to be tortured and tormented in body and soul, that He sweated bloody sweat, was sorrowful unto death, and felt forsaken by God Himself, so that He might know how we feel in our afflictions, and thus have compassion on us. Christ suffered far more terribly than any human being can even imagine. Not a drop of comfort refreshed his anguished soul. When He cried out, kneeling in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me!" — there was no answer: He had to drink the cup to the dregs. Therefore, Hebrews 4:15 says: "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet without sin." Yes, Hebrews 2:17-18 says: "Therefore, he had to become like his brothers, so that He might be merciful and a faithful high priest

before God, to reconcile the sins of the people. For in that He has suffered and been tempted, He is able to help those who are tempted." It is a wonderful depth of God's love into which our spirit is introduced through these passages. God already knows, in his omniscience, how we are often troubled in our needs. But so that the sinner may have no doubt about the mercy of his Savior, God allows every conceivable hardship to befall him, "so that he might become merciful"!

What devil, one must ask here too, has inspired the papacy to point Christians to the saints because they are more merciful than Christ? It is a terrible abomination of the Antichrist to portray Christ, the Savior, the "merciful, faithful High Priest," as a strict, cruel judge before whom one must fear, tremble, and quake, the Savior who compares Himself to a hen that lovingly and carefully takes her weak chicks under her wings; the Savior who calls Himself the good shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep!

Finally, Holy Scripture teaches 4) that we should pray in the name of Jesus. John 16:23: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." Yes, Christ says in John 14:13: "Whatever you ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." So it is the Father's glory that the Son Himself answers the prayers that are made in His name.

What devil has now inspired the papacy to say that one should come before God in the name of the saints? It is true, and every person, unless they are completely blinded by the devil, feels it: we cannot appear before God in our own name, for we are not only poor worms and like a drop in a bucket before the infinite King of heaven and earth, but we are also sinners and by nature under God's wrath. But it is our comfort that we can confidently approach God with all our petitions in Christ's name and be assured of being heard. And the devil wants to rob us of this comfort.

We must now see whether the Lutheran Church, with its doctrine of the worship of God, also gives Christ the honor that belongs to Him alone according to Scripture as Mediator and Intercessor.

The Augsburg Confession says: "It cannot be proven from Scripture that one should call upon the saints or seek help from them; for there is only one single reconciler and mediator set between God and man, Jesus Christ, 1 Tim. 2:5, who is the only Savior, the only High Priest, the mercy seat and Intercessor before God. Rom. 8:34." (AC XXI 2)

The same reason against invoking the saints is also asserted by the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, when it says: ”Such abominations against Christ ... can be tolerated by bishops and theologians ... But they would gladly destroy us who preach the pure gospel, if we **therefore** contest the invocation of the saints, so that Christ alone may remain the mediator." (Art. XXI. § 38-39)

The same: “Now the adversaries teach that we should invoke the saints ... and thereby cause people to place greater trust in the saints than in Christ; yet Christ says, ‘Come unto me,’ not unto the saints.” (Art. XXI, 21)

Those who go directly to Christ, in accordance with His call, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden,” can be certain that they will find a gentle Savior, before whom they need not fear. —

But let us now hear what the papists have to say about this. The papists do have crucifixes in all their churches, and the sign of the cross is used more by them than anywhere else. But the crucified one has long since been removed from their churches. Beneath their crucifixes is often written the angelic greeting: “*Ave Maria, gratia plena*!” “Hail Mary, full of grace!” as they interpret it, instead of “you have found grace.” And the sign of the cross has been reduced to a magic charm among them.

Konrad Dannhauer writes in his “Catechism Milk”:

> "The Jesuit Mendoza raises a strange question as to which is better, to call on the name of Jesus or the name of Mary in times of need; he decides as follows: It is more advisable to go confidently, directly, and immediately to the Virgin Mary, who can sometimes be moved more easily than her son; the latter being a strict judge, but the mother of all mercy being the patroness and intercessor; just as Queen Esther appeased Ahasuerus when he was angry with the Jews, to whom the king said, ‘Half the kingdom shall be given to you’: so the Virgin Mary is the same queen to whom God has granted half of his kingdom, keeping for himself the kingdom of justice, and leaving to His mother the kingdom of mercy, through which He can gain more devotion and piety from mankind; therefore it often happened that when Christ was so enraged by the sin of the world that he armed his hands with fiery arrows and thunderbolts to destroy the world, the Mother of God intervened and met her Son in such a way that he dropped the rod and revoked his prepared vengeance." (*Kat.-Milch* p. 150.)

Of course, we are told that this is only a private writing and that the Church

cannot be blamed for what individual theologians have said. But this is only to throw sand in the eyes of the simple-minded. The Roman Church is otherwise sharp enough in its censorship when something does not suit it. But here it remains silent because it likes to see a theologian use rather coarse language for once.

Incidentally, its confessions speak in a very similar vein. Among other things, the Roman Catechism states:

> "Of course, they (the deceased saints) should be venerated and invoked even more because they constantly pray for the salvation of mankind, and God bestows many blessings upon us because of their merits and for their own sake. For if there is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, will not the citizens of heaven also support those who repent? Will they not, when asked, implore forgiveness for our sins and obtain God's grace for us?" (III, 2, 13.)

The same source:

> "But the holy Church of God has also rightly added to this thanksgiving prayers and an invocation of the most holy Mother of God, whereby we devoutly and humbly take refuge in her, that she may through her intercession with God reconcile us sinners and obtain for us the goods we need both for this life and for eternal life. Consequently, we, the banished children of Eve, who inhabit this valley of tears, must incessantly invoke the Mother of Mercy and the Advocate (*advocatam*) of the faithful people, that she may plead for us sinners and implore help and assistance from her through this prayer; for only the wicked and malicious can doubt that she has the most glorious merits and the best will with God to help the human race." (IV, 5, 8.)

It is terrible that the papacy, in physical distress, exhorts souls to invoke the saints as the best intercessors. For this is precisely a horrible form of idolatry. But it is infinitely more terrible that it also points to the saints in spiritual distress, in distress of conscience, sin, and death. For in this way it obstructs its children's path to obtaining forgiveness of sins, and either comforts them into hell or lets them perish in despair. Anyone who cannot yet recognize that the Pope is the prophesied Antichrist must be completely blind. Even Pusey, who was very inclined toward Catholicism, was particularly deterred from finally converting to the papacy by his realization that “the religion of the Roman Church is more Marian than Christian.”

As proof of the intercession of their saints, papist theologians point out that even among men, every

distinguished man considers only those requests that are presented and supported by his secretary or his favorites. How much more must this be the case with the great God! That is why the

Apology says:

"Where is the order established by God, of which Gabriel (Biel) speaks, that we should flee to the saints? Let him bring forth a word, a single example from Holy Scripture. Perhaps they make the order from the custom that is in princely courts, where the prince's counselors present the affairs of poor people and promote them as mediators. But what if a prince or king appointed a single mediator and would hear no other matters in mercy or grant all requests through him alone? Therefore, since Christ alone is appointed high priest and mediator, why do we seek others? What can the adversaries say against this?" (Art. XXI. § 24)

Chemnitz comments very thoroughly on this supposed proof of the papists: (The papists say:)

"At royal courts, subjects do not have immediate access to the prince himself, and if someone were to suddenly appear before the king, he would be received badly. Rather, one must first turn to those who are in the prince's good graces and endear oneself to them through service, so that through them our affairs may be settled with the prince. This is even more true when we have to turn to God.' The answer to this argument is easy. For it is not from comparisons with human things, especially those corrupted by sin, but from the Word revealed by God that we are to judge the will of God. For it is written: “I am God, and not man,” Hos. 11:9. And concerning the matter of invocation itself, it is written: “My thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not my ways, says the Lord; but as much as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” Isa. 55:8-9. And as for what the thoughts and ways of the Lord are concerning invocation, He has revealed this to us through His certain Word that has been handed down. To depart from this and judge God according to the corrupt customs of the courts would truly be most foolish, not to say godless. For when princes do not listen to their own people, they do not do so because of their office, but either out of pride and negligence, because they despise their own people and do not care for them, or because they are devoted to other lusts and pleasures and do not want to take time for the affairs of their own people. But how badly these corrupt habits affect the affairs of their subjects

is attested to by the complaints of the entire East and West, so that a certain witty person has gracefully mocked this argument. For when he had been led around a certain court for a long time with handshakes, flattery, and promises of gifts, and yet achieved little, and then heard a bishop publicly defend the invocation of saints in accordance with the customs of that court, he exclaimed: “If it is like this in heaven when we turn to God, as it is at court, then we are completely lost.” But I wanted to put this argument first, so that it may be noted how the invocation of saints is not taken from the Word of God, but has been fabricated from those human reasoning conclusions from which all the idolatry of the heathens arose. For Ambrose testifies in his interpretation of the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans that the pagans used this argument to confirm their idolatry (as one reaches the king through counts). And Augustine reports in the 8th book of the *City of God* that the Platonists therefore invented certain intermediary deities between the supreme being (*principium*) and the prayers of men as mediators, who received our prayers and brought them before the supreme God, effected their fulfillment, and, after this was done, brought them back to us; for they thought we were not worthy to approach God ourselves, and that it was contrary to God's majesty to attend to the prayers of each individual, since it was likely that that supreme majesty was occupied with greater things. But it is known from Scripture that God wills, indeed, commands that we turn to Him with supplication, and promises to hear each individual and to care for even the smallest matters of each individual, such as the hairs falling from their heads." (*Examen Concil. Trid. Ed. Genev. f. 617 sq.*)

It is impossible to describe the sad fruits that this shameful doctrine, that one must not approach Christ directly but must seek the mediation of the saints, has borne. For one thing, it has meant that it is extremely rare for anyone to pray to God.

Chemnitz writes:

"Erasmus reports jokingly in his own way: When once, in a shipwreck, everyone took refuge in his saint, as in his guardian god, calling upon him, one man, seeing that the most urgent danger was imminent, which allowed no long delay and no late help, considered all kinds of things: if he called upon his Nicholas, it was uncertain whether he would hear him; he might be busy listening to the prayers of others and fulfilling them, and might not be able to help him so quickly, but even if he wanted to, he would not find a quick response from God. Finally, he decided to do the surest and most certain thing, namely to take refuge directly with God through Christ,

because it is written in Psalm 50: : ‘Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me’; and further, in Hebrews 4:16: ‘Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.’" (*Examen Concil. Trid. Ed. Genev. f. 613*) —

The second evil fruit was that Christ ceased to be the gracious Savior of tortured consciences and became a severe judge, from whom one would rather turn to the saints. On this subject,

Chemnitz writes on this subject:

"Consider only those reasons which are given why, besides Christ, the saints are also to be invoked as mediators and advocates or intercessors, namely because Christ is harder, stricter, and rougher, but the saints are more gracious, kind, and merciful, indeed, more willing to hear and help, since they themselves had experienced the same hardships in the flesh. This reason undeniably places the saints in the office of mediator not only beside Christ, but apparently also above him, and thus directly contradicts the expressed opinion of Scripture, Heb. 2:17-18; 4:15-16." (*Examen Concil. Trid. Ed. Genev. f. 615.*)

Luther is the clearest example of this, as he himself confesses in various places in his writings. Thus, in his “Sermons on the Third and Fourth Chapters of the Gospel of John,” which he preached from 1537 to 1540, he says: “I have also been so deep in darkness that I was an enemy of Christ and loved Mary and St. George.” (Erl. ed. 47. p. 41.) In his “Sermons on Several Chapters of the Evangelist Matthew” (1535-1540), he says:

"So we should now remain with the Lord Christ when we have sinned, and not turn our backs on Him, otherwise we will lose the forgiveness of sin. When I was in the monastery wearing the cap, I was so hostile to Christ that when I saw his painting or image hanging on the cross, etc., I was frightened and lowered my eyes, and would have preferred to see the devil. For my heart was completely poisoned by this papist doctrine that I had defiled my baptismal garment, lost Christ and Baptism, and now had to help myself; as is still preached in the papacy today: Christ has done enough for original sin, but whoever sins after receiving Baptism must do enough himself; and has become a devil out of Christ, the Savior. That is why people also crawled under Mary's mantle, made pilgrimages to the saints, did this and that; but it does not lead to heaven, but to the abyss of hell. “ (Erl. ed. 44, 127)

In the same sermons, Luther writes:

”We have all believed in the papacy and also preached and taught and pretended thus: How? If Christ is no longer your Savior? Then seek

> another, for Christ has now become your judge. See how you might reconcile Him and make Him gracious. Run into a monastery and torment yourself with fasting and prayer and call upon the saints, whip yourself so long until you yourself destroy your sin. That has been the teaching and belief of the pope. ... I was often frightened by the name of Jesus, and when I looked at Him on the cross, it seemed to me as if he were a flash of lightning, and when His name was mentioned, I would rather have heard the devil's name; for I thought I would have to do good works until Christ became my friend and was gracious to me. “ (Erl. ed. 45, 154. 156.)

It seems quite terrible to us when we read such confessions from this man of God; but he was just a good papist Christian and therefore had to fear Christ, ”the harsh judge," more than even the devil himself.

Meurer tells the following story in his “Life of Luther,” which has not been known for very long. He writes:

> "At that time (around 1503), another accident befell him. He was traveling to visit his parents (on the third day of Easter). On the way, he accidentally kicked his sword with his foot; the knife shot out and he stabbed himself, cutting a major artery. He was with a single companion, about half a mile from Erfurt. The blood flowed terribly and could not be stopped, and as he lay on his back, his leg raised and his finger pressed against the wound, his leg swelled enormously. Finally, a surgeon came from the city and bandaged the wound. But Luther cried out in mortal danger: “Mary, help!” And when the wound opened during the night and he fainted, he likewise called only on Mary. “At that time,” he said later, “I would have died for Mary.” (*Luther's Life*. Youth and Popular Edition. Leipzig 1878. p. 7.)

Here and there, despite the prevailing superstition, a soul found peace by turning to Christ alone.

Ludwig von Seckendorf recounts the following in his history of the Reformation about the end of Duke George of Saxony, one of the most furious enemies of the Reformation:

> "Father Eisenberg did his best to point the dying prince to his own merits and to the saints; beforehand, he earnestly commanded him to invoke his patron saint, St. James. When it became clear that this consolation was still far from sufficient and adequate for the frightened lord, Dr. Rothe dared to put his arms around the sick prince and cry out to him: " Gracious lord, you have a saying: Straightforwardness gives the best runners; therefore, pay no attention to what people tell you about deceased saints and other intercessors; but set your heart straightforwardly on the crucified Jesus, who died for our sins and is our only

> intercessor and savior, and you will be all the more certain of your salvation.' When the two chamberlains had carried the impetuous Eisenberg out and the prince heard these words of comfort, he is said to have said: 'Well then, help me, faithful Savior Jesus Christ; have mercy on me and make me blessed through your bitter suffering and death, Amen.' Then he passed away." (*Junii Compend. Seckendorfianum*, or A Concise History of the Reformation. Frankfurt 1755. III, 402.)

And, as we hope, he fell asleep blessedly. For it is not man's merit or worthiness, but God's free grace that opens heaven even to the most rejected sinner, if he appropriates Christ's merit in faith. — Finally, here is a passage from a letter from the

Church of Smyrna from the second century, in which it describes the end of the martyr Polycarp; which is further proof that even the early church turned only to Christ as the one and only intercessor. Towards the end of this letter, it says:

> "Some gave Nicetas permission to speak to the proconsul, that he should not give up his (Polycarp's) body, lest the Christians, as they said, let go of the Crucified One, and begin to worship Him. They said this on the information of the Jews, who watched us carefully when we wanted to take him out of the fire. But they did not know that we can never abandon Christ, who suffered for the salvation of the redeemed throughout the world, nor can we worship anyone else. For we worship Him as the Son of God, but we love the martyrs as disciples and followers of the Lord, well deserved because of their exuberant love for their king and teacher. May we also become their companions and fellow disciples!" (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, trans. by Stroth. St. Louis, Mo. Published by Volkening, 1869. Book IV. Chap. 15. p. 119 f.)

Let us now think of the terrible moral dilemmas into which Luther was plunged to an extraordinary degree by the invocation of saints, and in which countless good Catholics still torment themselves in vain today; and let us also remember that God has allowed us to be born and raised in a church that gives Him all glory, and thereby opens up the richest source of comfort to its members through the pure knowledge that we have free access to God's grace through Christ, our only mediator: our hearts should overflow with joy and our mouths be full of thanksgiving; we should now also hasten diligently to the Father's heart of our God through Christ in all our concerns, whatever they may be.

44 [1882 Western District Convention essay by Walther]

**Thesis II.** ^

Our church teaches that Christ, God and man in one person, is to be invoked and worshipped, not his divinity alone.

When considering this thesis, one would naturally like to delve deeply into the wonderful doctrine of the person of Jesus Christ, of the personal union of both natures in Christ, and of the communication of attributes. But here we must content ourselves with the simplest explanation.

The Gospel of John begins with the mysterious and sublime words:

> "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:1-4, 14).

With these words, the Holy Spirit reveals to us that the eternal personal Word, through whom all things were made, that is, the true, living God Himself, became man. He, the only begotten Son of God, did not merely take up residence in the flesh; that could be an indwelling of God, as every believing Christian may experience. No, it says: “The Word became flesh!” This is the greatest, highest, deepest, most wonderful, most worshipful mystery of divine wisdom and mercy among all those that God has revealed to us in His Word. Even the apostle Paul, filled with admiration through the Holy Spirit, must exclaim: "Great indeed is the godly mystery: God is revealed in the flesh! " (1 Tim. 3:16). Yes, even the holy angels desire to look into this depth, as Peter writes in the first chapter of his first letter in verse 12.

However incomprehensible this mystery is, Holy Scripture speaks of it in very unambiguous terms. In Col. 2:9, Paul says: “In him (in Christ) dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (*σωματιχώς*), that is, just as the soul dwells in the human body, so that both constitute a spiritual-physical human person, so the whole fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ's human nature, so that Godhead and humanity are one divine-human person. As it says in the Athanasian Creed: “Just as body and soul are one human being, so God and man are one Christ.”

Therefore, Holy Scripture also calls the God Christ man and the man Christ God, and speaks of human things concerning the God Christ and divine things concerning the man Christ. It says,

for example: “The Prince of Life” — that is, the true God — “you have killed”; “the Lord of Glory” — that is, the true God — “you crucified.” (Acts 3:15, 1 Cor. 2:8) “Christ comes from the fathers according to the flesh, who is God above all, blessed forever” (Rom. 9:5), so the true God has a human lineage. “God acquired the church through His own blood.” (Acts 20:28). “The blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanses us from all sin.” (1 John 1:7). Here, Holy Scripture attributes something purely creaturely and human to God, namely that He has blood. But again, Scripture speaks of divine things concerning Christ, who is human. It says: “The holy one to be born of you” — that is, the true man — “will be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35), that is, He will be the Son of God. “The second man is the Lord from heaven” (1 Cor. 15:47). Christ himself, in his state of humiliation, calls Himself “the Son of Man who is in heaven” and “ascends to heaven” as the one who came down from heaven. (John 3:13). Yes, when He once asked His disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” and Peter answered, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,” Christ does not reject this answer as blasphemy, but on the contrary praises Simon Peter, because this was not revealed to him by flesh and blood, but by His Father in heaven. (Matthew 16:13, 16.)

From this it follows naturally that Christ, as God and man in one person, is to be invoked and worshipped not only according to His divinity, but also according to his humanity. But we do not base this part of the doctrine of prayer on this mere conclusion; rather, Scripture itself expressly demands it. For we find two things in it: first, that we are called upon to invoke the whole person of Christ, that is, also according to his humanity, or as a human being, and indeed expressly so; and second, that the believers have gone before us in this by their example.

First, Philippians 2:9–11 says: “Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” It is obvious that Christ is being referred to here as a human being. It does not merely say that the kneeling or worship and invocation should take place in the name of the Son of God, but expressly: “in the name of Jesus.” But Jesus is the name of our Savior, which he received in His humanity. And furthermore, according to these words, it is precisely He who has been exalted who is to be invoked; exalted at the right hand of the

Father, to divine omnipotence and majesty. But the Godhead can neither be exalted nor humbled. Of it it is said: “You remain as you are.” So it cannot be the Godhead that is meant, but must be the humanity. This is finally shown by the words: “And has given Him a name that is above every name.” According to the divinity, however, nothing more could be given to Christ, since as God He already had everything from eternity. “What is given to Christ in time is given to him according to His humanity,” is therefore the old theological rule. Thus, in this passage, the worship of Christ is demanded by angels and men precisely as a human being or according to his humanity.

Psalm 45:11 says: “For he is your Lord, and you shall worship him.” Who is the Lord whom the Church is to worship according to this? The one whom this psalm praises with the words: “Thou art fairer than the children of men.” This includes all the messianic passages of the Old Testament in which the future Savior of the world, that is, Christ, the God-man in one person, is given the honor of worship. For example, Psalm 72:11: “All kings shall worship him, all nations shall serve him.” Psalm 97:7: “Worship him, all you gods!” (cf. Hebrews 1:6, where that passage is interpreted as referring to Christ). Isaiah 45:23: “Every knee shall bow to me.” (cf. Romans 14:11, where that passage is also interpreted as referring to Christ). Joel 3:5: “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” (Compare Romans 10:13, as above.)

When Paul finally asks in Romans 10:14, “How can they call on Him in whom they have not believed?” he explains at the same time that one can only call on, but also should call on, the one in whom one believes. Now, however, we believe not only in the divinity of Christ, but in the whole Christ, God and man in one person. For only as such is He our mediator. As it says in 1 Tim. 2:5: “There is one God and one mediator between God and men, namely the man Christ Jesus.”

Among the examples presented to us in Holy Scripture, foremost is that of the wise men from the East, of whom it is said: “They found the child with Mary, His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him,” not the mother, but the child. (Matthew 2:11) Then, during the time of Christ's public ministry, countless people in need fell on their knees before him, the almighty helper, and begged Him for help. The Lord never refused them, but always accepted this honor as due to Him. Or did all these seekers of help worship only His divinity, completely disregarding His humanity? — After the resurrection, it is said of the disciples: “When they saw him, they fell down before him and worshiped him.” Matt. 28:17. Luke 24:52. They saw him only in his humanity, and yet

they fell down before him on their knees. And Christ does not say, “Examine yourselves carefully to see whether you are now giving the honor of worship only to my divine nature. When you worship me, your hearts must completely disregard my humanity, and your prayers must be directed only to my divinity.” No, nothing of the sort. Rather, Christ takes pleasure in their worship. Indeed, he praises Thomas, who, having just touched the nail marks, now worships and proclaims him as his “Lord” and his “God,” and only criticizes him for not having believed before. — The first martyr, Stephen, called upon the Lord twice during his stoning: “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit! Lord, do not hold this sin against them!” He does not say, “Lord, thou Son of God,” but calls upon Jesus and finds his prayer answered. — Furthermore, the prayer of Ananias in Acts 9:13-14 is exceedingly remarkable, in which he characterizes Christians as invokers of Jesus, saying to Christ, speaking of Saul, “He has all power here,” and calling him “Lord Jesus.” 9:13-14, in which he characterizes Christians as invokers of Jesus. In referring to Saul, he addresses Christ: “He has power from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name”; and thus testifies that whoever does not want to pray to Jesus should not dare to call himself a Christian. — Indeed, it is so much the duty to render the honor of worship to the humanity of Christ that even all the inhabitants of heaven fall down before the “Lamb that was slain” and “worship” Him. Rev. 5:12–14. And to add one more thing: The entire Holy Scripture concludes with a prayer to the God-man, in which he is again called by his human name: “Come, Lord Jesus! Amen!”

Is it not appalling that almost all churches except the Lutheran, Calvinists as well as Papists, teach that it is permissible to worship Christ according to his divinity, but that to worship him according to his humanity is idolatry? It is now commonly believed that even though the various Christian parties differ in so many doctrines, they are all united in the belief that Christ is truly God and truly man in one person. But this is by no means the case. For although the sects talk much about Christ's divinity and humanity, they do not do so in the sense of Scripture. They have no understanding whatsoever that Christ's blood is truly God's blood, that Christ's body, heart, eyes, and hands are God's body, heart, eyes, and hands, because divinity and humanity are personally, that is, united in one person. They believe that God united Himself with the man Jesus only to a much higher degree and in a much closer way than with other people. But no; the Son of God did not, so to speak, take on a finished human being, an independent human person, but a human nature, a humanity, and took this into His person and gave it his personality. If the sects' conception of Christ's person were correct, then one could not worship the man Jesus,

who existed apart from the person of the Son of God, without idolatry, any more than one could worship a fellow Christian in whom God himself dwells with all his grace. But this is precisely a false conception. Because one cannot comprehend the wonderful mystery of the incarnation of God with one's reason, one tears it apart with a sacrilegious hand. While God's Word so clearly testifies that in Christ the whole fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily, as the soul dwells in the body of a human being, that therefore in Christ's person God is man and man is God, that wherever his Godhead is, his humanity is also, and that therefore, as the Godhead is worthy of worship, so also is humanity in its union with the Godhead: Papists and Reformed Christians deny this most wonderful and incomprehensible teaching of Scripture. They deny the truth of the promise of the God-man: “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am among them.” They rob Christians of this wonderful comfort and the whole human race of this high honor, that they may pray to their Brother in all their needs. Yes, they rob Christ of the honor that is due to Him, that His humanity is also exalted at the right hand of power on high.

Even the Christians of the post-apostolic period always worshipped the Crucified One as their God. We even have the testimony of a pagan, Pliny, to this effect. The church historian

Eusebius writes:

> "In Tertullian's Latin Apology it is stated: 'We have found that the investigation against us has been forbidden. For when Pliny Secundus was governor and had condemned various Christians and deprived others of their dignities, he was finally put in an awkward position by the multitude of them and sought instructions from the emperor Trajan (98-117) as to how he should proceed. He reported that he had learned nothing more about their religion than that they refused to sacrifice to idols and that they gathered in the morning to sing songs in honor of Christ as a god and to maintain unity in their religion; otherwise, they forbade murder and adultery, fraud, perjury, and other vices." (The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius of Caesarea. St. Louis, Mo., by L. Volkening. 1869. p. 94.)

Reformed Christians and Papists can therefore refer neither to Scripture nor to Christian antiquity when they say: when praying to Christ, one must completely disregard the person of our Savior and turn only to His divinity. This is rather the old error of the Nestorians, long since condemned by the Church, who also separated the two natures in Christ in such a way that two Christs arose, a man who could not be worshiped and a God who could not be crucified.

49 [1882 Western District Convention essay by Walther]

But what does the Lutheran Church teach?

Already in the Augsburg Confession, it confesses: “This is also the highest worship according to Scripture, that one should seek and call upon the same Jesus Christ with all one's heart in all needs and concerns.” (AC XXI 3) — Prompted by disputes over the doctrine of the person of Christ, however, our church had to express itself more precisely on this very question in the

Formula of Concord. It states:

"Therefore we believe, teach, and confess that the Son of Man is exalted at the right hand of the almighty majesty and power of God is *realiter*, that is, in deed and truth, according to human nature because He was excepted from God when He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in His mother's womb and His human nature was personally united with the Son of the Most High. Which majesty He always had according to the personal union, and yet expressed Himself in the state of His humiliation, and [therefore] truly increased in all wisdom and grace with God and men; therefore He did not always show such majesty, but only when it pleased Him, until He completely laid down the form of a servant, and not his nature, after his resurrection (Phil. 2:6 ff.) and placed in the full use, revelation, and manifestation of divine majesty, thus entering into his glory, so that he now, not only as God but also as man, knows all things, can do all things, is present to all creatures, and has all things in heaven, on earth, and under the earth under His feet and in His hands; as He himself testifies: “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth”; and St. Paul: “He is gone above all the heavens, that He might fill all things”; which power He can exercise everywhere, and everything is possible and known to Him." (Ep. Art. VIII. § 15. 16)

It is often objected that Christ did not demand worship from anyone during his time on earth. The answer to this is given by Luther when he says that the worship of Christ during his time and state of humiliation was voluntary and no one was forced to do so. It is enough for us that the Lord did not prevent anyone from worshipping him, but accepted it. Christ's humiliation consisted precisely in this, that He did not always show and use all the divine majesty that He also possessed according to His humanity by virtue of His personal union, in order to become like us in all things except sin, and to be able to suffer and die for us.

Regarding the doctrines of the Calvinists and Papists, Quenstedt writes:

"The Calvinists claim: 'To say that Christ's flesh is to be worshipped is the sin of terrible idolatry.' This is written, for example, by Theodore Beza... Most Calvinists make a distinction between mere and simply divine worship, purely human worship, and finally mediatorial worship; the former they reserve solely for the divine nature; but they do not dare to attribute purely human worship to the flesh of Christ; therefore they teach that the God-man Christ is to be worshipped through a mediatorial or as the mediator of both natures. Thus Danaus... However, Calvinists themselves do not agree among themselves as to what this intermediate worship consists of, and they often change their wording, but never their meaning. — The Papists, who make a distinction between worship (*latreia*) and excessive worship (*hyperduleia*), attribute worship to God alone, veneration to angels and men, but the cult of hyper-veneration to the humanity of Christ and the Blessed Virgin." (*L. c. f. 287 sqq*.)

It is indeed exceedingly terrible that the Calvinists follow their reason so far that they themselves declare what Holy Scripture presents to us in commandment, promise, and example to be idolatry! They do not want to accord divine veneration to the humanity of Christ, but they do not dare to withdraw all worship from Him. But where does Scripture say a single word about such half-hearted, so-called "mediatory" worship as they invent? If the honor is greater than that which is due to a creature, then it is divine, and therefore, according to Calvin's view, idolatrous; but if it is not divine worship, then our mediator is reduced to a mere creature, and that is contrary to the clear teaching of Scripture. There is no third option here. The same applies to the so-called "hyper-veneration" of the Papists.

Zwingli was already among those who did not want to accept the teaching of Scripture on the communication of natures without reservation. But because he could not get around the clear statements of Scripture, he helped himself by inventing a new figure of speech, which he called alloeosis or shifting of emphasis.

According to this figure, he said, one could say something about a subject, even though one meant something completely different. Everyone can see that such language is pure mischief. For example, according to Zwingli, it would be an alloeosis if Christ said that the Son of Man is in heaven, he meant to say that the Son of God is in heaven, etc. Luther took a very serious stance against this, writing, among other things: "That is, he (Zwingli) calls it alloeosis when something is said about the divinity of Christ that actually pertains to humanity, or vice versa."

Luther took a very serious stance when he wrote, among other things:

"That is to say, he (Zwingli) calls it alloeosis when something is said about the divinity of Christ that actually pertains to humanity, or vice versa; as in Luke 24:26: 'Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer and thus enter into His glory? Here he deludes

us into thinking that Christ is taken for human nature. Beware, beware, I say, of alloeosis, it is the devil's mask; for it ultimately judges such a Christ, according to which I would not want to be a Christian, namely that Christ is no longer there with His suffering and life, but just another saint. For if I believe that human nature alone suffered for me, then Christ is a poor savior to me; then He Himself needs a savior. In short, it is unspeakable what the devil seeks with the alloeosis.“ (XX, 1180 [StL 20, 942-943; AE 37:209 f.])

The same:

”Schwenkfeld does not know what he is talking about, but this is his opinion and his principle: The creature must not be worshipped, because it is written: ‘You shall worship God, your Lord.’ He concludes from this that Christ is a creature; therefore I should not worship Christ as a human being. And so he makes two Christs, saying that the creature was transformed into divinity after the resurrection and glorification and must therefore be worshipped... The children recite it poorly: “I believe in Jesus Christ, our Lord, conceived by the Holy Spirit,” etc. Thus the fool wants to make two Christs for me, one hanging on the cross and another at the right hand of the Father. I am not to worship the Christ who hangs on the cross and walks on earth. He allowed himself to be worshipped when they fell down before him and said, ‘Whoever believes in me believes in him who sent me.’" (W[1] XXI, 1594 [AE 54:469 f.])

Hunnius:

"Christ is, as the apostle expressly assures us, ‘a name that is above every name, given that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,’ Phil. 2:10-11. But this name is given to him, as the Church Fathers unanimously agree and as the context of the apostolic text proves, according to His human nature. This is also proven above all by the Greek word used by the apostle in that passage, namely *echarisato*, which means that he has given it as a gift or out of grace. For that name worthy of worship could not be given or bestowed by grace upon the divinity of Christ, since it is worthy of worship by nature." (*Libelli IV de persona etc. p*. 147)

Gerhard:

"Christ the man is worthy of religious worship... By religious worship we do not mean any lesser worship than that which is due to God, but a truly divine worship, due to God alone. However, we do not call human nature worthy of worship through and from itself in relation to its essential characteristics;

because it does not exist through itself by its own personality, therefore it is also not to be worshipped through and from itself. Nor do we say that it is only accidentally worthy of worship, as when a king is honored, his purple robe is also accidentally honored. For because it does not exist in the (eternal, personal) Word as something accidental, but as part of the person, it is not merely accidentally worthy of worship... We also do not say that Christ's flesh is to be worshipped because it has been essentially transformed into the divine nature or swallowed up by the divine nature, or is of the same nature, the same status, and the same constitution as the nature of the Word, as Schwenkfeld taught. We also do not say that it is to be worshipped in the sense that it constitutes a special person distinct from the Word; but we say that Christ, God and man, is to be honored with the same reverence of religious worship because the personality of both natures is one and the same undivided. The worship of Christ, which Scripture knows, is the one that belongs to the Word according to His essence, to the assumed flesh by virtue of the grace of union. When we say that Christ as man is worthy of religious worship, the phrase “as man” does not express the reason and cause of worship, for human nature is not the reason and cause, but (only) the object of worship, which is not only the divine nature, but also the human nature assumed in the person of the Word." (*Conf. cath*. f. 478.)

The Godhead is like the sun, which imparts its light to the moon, so that it too shines, but only as long as the sun shines on it. If it were possible (which is not the case, however) for the divinity to ever separate itself from humanity again, then the divinity would retain its divine attributes, but humanity would immediately lose them, and then its worship would truly be idolatry. But as long as both are personally united (and the union is and remains inseparable for all eternity), it is sacrilege to deprive humanity of this honor, not because humanity has been so improved and enlarged and its nature so changed that it has ceased to be a creature; no, humanity has not been transformed into the Godhead, it remains humanity and retains its creaturely attributes forever. But the divine attributes are communicated to it. Therefore,

Quenstedt also writes:

"The flesh or human nature of Christ is not to be worshipped separately or as a separate person, but as the nature that has become personal, which exists personally in the person of the Son of God and has become partaker of the divine majesty through personal union. “ (*Theol. did.-polem. P. III. cap. 3. s. 2. q. 15. f. 296*.)

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And with that, the objection that one might think to take from Isa. 48:11, ”I will not give my glory to another," also falls away. Regarding this in another place Quenstedt says:

"It is objected to us: Isa. 48:11 says that God Himself says, ‘I will not give my glory,’ that is, religious worship, ‘to another’; but Christ's flesh is not God. — Answer: When the incarnate Word communicates the honor of worship to human nature through personal union, it does not give it to ‘another,’ but to its own humanity, that is, to the one it has made its own through union and has incorporated into the unity of its person, without any multiplication, equalization, or diminishment of itself." (*L. c. f.* 297.)

Scherzer writes:

"The honor bestowed upon the humanity of Christ has not been bestowed upon another person distinct from God. Therefore, the worship attributed solely to the Trinity does not exclude the humanity of Christ, but includes it. For whomsoever one believes in, one calls upon religiously according to Romans 10:14: ‘How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?’; but we believe in the man Christ, John 3:16; thus. For the Father ‘has given the Son power to execute judgment also, that all may honor the Son as they honor the Father’, John 5:22, 27. But he has given Christ the power to judge according to humanity; thus also the honor of the same worship by which the Father himself is worshiped; the same, I say, in essence, not in manner. For God is worshipped in relation to himself and his nature, and humanity is worshipped in relation to something else and out of grace or for the sake of the grace of union, Phil. 2:9-11. Because Christ's flesh (that is, his human nature) is the flesh of the Word, not of a mere man, the passage in Jer. 17:5: “Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his arm,” is vainly opposed; for there only the one who considers the flesh of a mere man, not that of a God-man, to be his arm is declared cursed. (*Syst. th. Loc. II. p*. 81.)

One could also explain it as idolatry if we rely on God's Word, when in fact we do so only because God's Word is an outflow (*απόρροια*) from God, and we therefore actually trust only in God himself.

This teaching of our church about the worship of Christ even according to his humanity is also reflected in our hymns. Let us just think of the wonderful Christmas carol:

"I rejoice in you
And welcome you,
My dearest little Jesus;
You have decided
To be my little Brother."

And the words of the fourth verse are addressed to this little Jesus, our little Brother:

"Well then, I will hold fast to you, O Jesus,
And even if the world
Should split into a thousand pieces;
O Jesus, to you, only to you,
I live for you alone,
To you, alone to you.
My Jesus, I fall asleep."

But what Paul Gerhardt sings is utterly magnificent:

"Lord, my Shepherd, fountain of all joy,
You are mine, I am yours,
No one can separate us;
I am yours because you gave your life
And your blood for my sake In death.
"You are mine because I fast
And do not, O my light,
Let you out of my heart.
Let me, let me get there,
Where you and I
Physically embrace each other."

In newer hymnals, the word "physically" is often changed to "lovely." But this is precisely what Gerhardt means. Here we have looked at our Savior with the eyes of faith and embraced Him spiritually with the hand of prayer; but there, the seeing and embracing will be real, physical. Let the Papists and Calvinists laugh at us as idolaters: we remain true to the teaching of Scripture and wait for the time when they too, God grant, must bow their knees before Him without fear and trembling.

**Thesis III.** ^

Our church teaches that only prayer based solely on God's command and promise, and is offered in the name of Jesus, is pleasing to God and will be answered, but that even the faintest sigh of faith is precious to God and will certainly be answered.

**55** [1882 Western District Convention essay by Walther]

This thesis gives the third reason why only the Lutheran Church, with her teaching on prayer, gives all glory to God alone, namely because only it teaches correctly about the nature and character of a true prayer that is pleasing to God.

For just as even the pagans knew and still know that there is a God, but did not know and still do not know what this God is like, so too they knew that one must call upon God, but they did not know and still do not know what the right kind of worship pleasing to God is. God had to reveal it. And God has revealed to us what the third thesis calls the doctrine of our church, namely

1. that prayer must be based on God's command and promise and on Christ's merit, and

2. that such a prayer is pleasing to God and finds favor, even if it is but a sigh of weak faith.

1.

That true prayer must be based on God's commandment, we see above all in David's words: “My heart holds your word before you: You shall seek my face! Therefore, I also seek your face, Lord.” (Ps. 27:8, Luther’s German; DE) There are many passages where God commands us to pray. Among the Ten Commandments, the second one expressly commands us to “call upon the name of God in all our troubles, to pray, praise, and give thanks.” In Ps. 50:15, God calls out to us: “Call upon me in the day of trouble!” He does not say: You may, you are allowed to, you can call upon me; no, He commands us to ask for help, to pray in every need. And we should not be falsely modest and ask for only a little. On the contrary, God commands: “Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.” (Ps. 81:11) He wants us to ask much, very much of Him. Furthermore, the prophet Isaiah exclaims: “Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near!” (Isa. 55:6) This is not to say that God does not always want to be found and is not always near as long as one has His Word; rather, it means that if one no longer has God's Word, one can no longer find God, and that after the time of grace has expired, the door will be closed. But as long as a person has God's Word and as long as the time of grace lasts, the command “Seek! Call upon!” also applies. And this commandment of God must not be transgressed any more than any of the others. Christ says: "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. (Luke 11:9.) A wonderful interpretation of this passage, given by

Luther, may be found here. He writes:

> "Christ says: 'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. First, he wants us to ask when we are in trouble, for God often hides himself somewhere and does not want to hear us, indeed, he does not want to be found; so we must seek him, that is, persist in prayer. When we seek him, he locks himself in a little room; if we want to get in, we must knock. When we knock once or twice, he listens a little. Finally, if we knock too much, he opens the door and says, “What do you want?” “Lord, I want this or that.” Then he says, “So have it.” So we must wake him up." (W[1] XXII, 835 ff.)

And not only is prayer itself commanded, but God's Word also calls us to “persevere in prayer” (Rom. 12:12), “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17), and “pray always in the Spirit, with all your prayers and supplications” (Eph. 6:18). So not only should there be no matter, however small or great, that we do not want to bring before God, but there should also be no time when we do not pray. We cannot always bend our knees and fold our hands; but “in the Spirit” we can and should always come before God with requests and supplications, always communicating with God and approaching Him with the sighs and desires of our hearts.

As for the promise on which we should base our prayers, James 5:16-18 is particularly relevant here. “The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. Elijah was a human being, just like us, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.” Elijah, who accomplished so much with his prayer, “was,” it says, “a man just like us.” Take note of this! Every person may therefore, based on the promise, “The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective,” present their need to God: they will be heard. The greater piety of the person praying does not make their prayer powerful and effective. No, according to Scripture, true prayer requires, on the contrary, that one despair of all one's own worthiness and merit.

Thirdly, however, one must also base one's prayer solely on Christ's merit. This means praying in the name of Jesus. Daniel gives us a beautiful example of this when he speaks to God with the whole people: “We lie before you with our prayer, not on our righteousness, but on your great mercy” (Dan. 9:18), which in New Testament language means “for the sake of Jesus Christ,” “in the name of Jesus Christ.” Christ says of prayer in His name: “Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything

in my name, He will give it to you.” (John 16:23) “Whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.” (Matthew 21:22)

But is there really a church that denies that a true, God-pleasing prayer must be based on God's command and promise and on Christ's merit? — Admittedly, no church denies this outright, but no church except the Evangelical Lutheran Church takes it seriously. The enthusiasts, for example, make the godliness of prayer dependent on man's worthiness and skill in praying. A prayer that is not spoken freely “from the heart” with great eloquence is hardly considered a prayer by them. And yet it is usually the case that the less one feels worthy and the less the words flow, the more pleasing the prayer is to God. For then one clings to the divine command, as if to say, "If you had not commanded it, O God, I would not dare to cry out to you. But you want it. And you have promised that you will not put to shame those who run to you. On the basis of this command and promise, I come before you in the name of Jesus." Then, even if the person praying feels unworthy, even if he has just committed a mortal sin, even if, like Peter, he has just denied his Savior, even if his mouth cannot find words and only tears wet his cheeks, or even if it is only the tax collector's sigh, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner,” rise up to God from the depths of his heart: this is still a powerful prayer, a prayer that pleases God and that he cannot leave unheard.

But there is such a lack of simple and single-minded adherence to God's commandment and promise—and unfortunately not only among the sects, but even among us Lutherans. How much more eagerly and joyfully would we turn to God in every need, even in the need of our souls, in the trials that our sins bring upon us, if we always remembered his commandment and his promise! If a king not only declared himself willing to pay the debts of all the debtors in his country, but also commanded them to have them paid from his treasury, would even one of them remain behind? But God is just as kind, indeed much kinder, for he not only commands us to ask him to forgive our debts, but also to ask him for everything we need. All preachers must therefore work to ensure that the evangelical character of the prescribed prayer is first brought to bear on themselves and then on their congregations. The dogmatists of the 17th century mostly treated the doctrine of prayer under the locus of the law, and as a result, the rich consolation that lies in the demand for prayer was somewhat pushed into the background. During the Reformation, however, we find

that in dogmatics, prayer is always dealt with in a separate chapter, where the legalistic aspect recedes and the genuine Lutheran, that is, scriptural, evangelical view of the commandment to pray comes into its own. [Walther renews the vigor of the Reformation!]

If we now look at the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, we find that it bases the godliness of prayer on nothing other than God's commandment and promise and Christ's merit.

Even our children learn to answer the question, “What does ‘Amen’ mean?” with the following response: “That I should be certain that such petitions are pleasing to the Father in heaven and will be heard; for he himself has commanded us to pray thus and promised that He will hear us, Amen, Amen, that is, Yes, yes, it shall be so.”

The Large Catechism states: “By calling upon it and praying, the name of God is honored and used profitably.” [LC III, 8] For if we do not pray hypocritically and pretend to pray, if we do not merely parrot our morning and evening prayers or the Lord's Prayer while we actually want nothing from God and hardly think about what our lips are saying, for such prayer certainly does not honor God; rather, it is a shameful desecration of God's name; indeed, it is not prayer at all, but nothing but hypocrisy.

> "You should note above all else that we should be silent and reject such thoughts that keep us from it and deter us; for just as it is worthless for a son to say to his father, 'What does my obedience matter? I will go and do what I can, it is still just as important; but there stands the commandment: You shall and must do it; so here too it is not in my will to do or not to do, but prayer must and shall be offered (under God's wrath and disfavor). One must now understand and remember above all else that one should be silent and reject the thoughts that keep us from it and deter us, as if there were no great power in whether we pray or not, or as if it were commanded to those who are holier and better with God than we are; for the human heart is by nature so desperate that it always flees from God and thinks that He does not want or accept our prayers because we are sinners and deserve nothing but wrath. Against such thoughts [I say] we should consider this commandment and turn to God, lest we provoke Him further by such disobedience. For through this commandment He makes it sufficiently clear that He does not want to reject or chase us away, even though we are sinners, but rather draw us to Himself, that we may humble ourselves before Him, complain of our misery and need, and ask for mercy and help. Therefore, we read in Scripture that He is also angry with those who, because of their sins,

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have been struck down, that they did not turn back to Him and, through prayer, appease His anger and seek mercy. From this you should now conclude and think, because it is so highly commanded to pray, that no one should despise prayer, but rather hold it in high esteem, and always take the parable of the other commandments. A child should by no means despise his obedience to his father and mother, but always remember: The work is a work of obedience, and what I do, I do not do of my own accord, but because [it] is in obedience and God's commandment, on which I can base and ground myself, and regard it as great, not for my own worthiness, but for the sake of the commandment. So also here, whatever and for whatever we pray, we should regard it as required by God and done in obedience to Him, and thus think: For my sake it would be nothing, but it should be valid because God has commanded it. Therefore, everyone, whatever he has to ask for, should always come before God with obedience to this commandment. Therefore, we ask and exhort everyone most earnestly to take this to heart and in no way despise our prayer; for until now it has been taught in the devil's name that no one has regarded this, and it has been thought that it is enough that the work be done, whether God hears it or not. That is to say, prayer is put on the line and left to chance; therefore, it is a lost prayer. For we allow such thoughts to mislead and deter us: I am not holy or worthy enough; if I were as pious and holy as St. Peter or Paul, then I would pray. But cast such thoughts far away; for precisely the commandment that St. Paul fulfilled applies to me as well, and the other commandment is set forth for my sake as much as for his; that he has no better or holier commandment to boast of. Therefore, you should say: My prayer, which I offer, is as precious, holy, and pleasing to God as that of St. Paul and the Most Holy; for I will gladly let him be holier in terms of person, but not in terms of commandment, because God does not regard prayer in terms of the person, but in terms of His Word and obedience to it. For I place my prayer on the commandment on which all the saints place theirs; I pray for the same things that they all pray for or have prayed for; so it is as important and more necessary for me than for those great saints. — Let this be the first and most necessary part, that all our prayers should be based on and stand on obedience to God, regardless of our person, whether we are sinners or pious, worthy or unworthy; and we should know that God does not want to be trifled with, but will be angry and punish us if we do not pray, just as He punishes all other disobedience; after that, He will not let our prayers be in vain and lost; for if He did not want to hear you, He would not command you to pray and impose such a strict commandment on it. —

> Secondly, we should be all the more driven and motivated by the fact that God has also made a promise and assured us that what we ask for will surely and certainly be granted, as He says in Psalm 50:15: ‘Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you’; and Christ in the Gospel of Matthew 7:7-8: ‘Ask, and it shall be given you, etc.; for everyone who asks receives.’ This should always awaken our hearts and inspire us to pray with joy and love, because he testifies with his word that our prayers are pleasing to him, and that they will certainly be heard and granted, so that we do not despise them or treat them lightly and pray uncertainly. You can bring this before Him and say: Here I am, dear Father, and I ask, not because of my own merits or worthiness, but because of your command and promise, which cannot fail me or lie. Whoever does not believe in such a promise should know that he angers God, as he dishonors Him most and accuses Him of lying." (LC III 12-21; from the German)

In any case, therefore, those who doubt that their prayers will be answered take away God's honor, whether it be because they do not give God the honor of His truthfulness in the depths of their hearts, or because they do not consider themselves good and worthy enough to be heard, thus casting doubt on God's grace. Of course, even the best Christian will often have doubts as to whether God will value his prayer highly. For the devil and the flesh are busy. But all the more reason for the Christian to rely firmly on God's commandment and promise and not cease to implore: “I believe, Lord; help my unbelief!”

Many foolish Christians think it is humility to consider their prayers insignificant and to belittle them, perhaps because they lack a flow of words or sweet feelings, as if these made their prayers more acceptable to God. But this is not humility; it is pride. They want the glory for themselves. A Christian should think highly of his prayer, if it is based on God's commandment and promise and Christ's merit, and as surely as God is true, so surely should the Christian believe that his prayer will benefit him, yes, open heaven and the Father's heart. What Luther once said in his sermons against the agitator Carlstadt about confession: “I would have been overcome and strangled by the devil long ago if this confession had not preserved me,” all Christians must say about their prayers. How can they, how dare they, think little of them without robbing God of His glory?

That faith in the answering of prayer rests firmly on the truthfulness of God, says Luther in his sermon on the Gospel of the wedding at Cana:

> "Here you also see how faith does not fail and God does not let it fail, but gives more and more gloriously than one asks for. For here, not only wine is given, but delicious and

> good wine, and in abundance. So that He may once again entice and lure us to believe in Him comfortingly, even if He delays. For He is true and cannot deny Himself; He is good and gracious, He must confess this of Himself and also prove it; unless one hinders Him and does not allow Him the time, place, and manner to do so: in the end, He cannot refrain from doing so, any more than He can refrain from being himself, whoever can endure it." (W[1] XI, 648)

**2.**

The present thesis states that the Lutheran Church also gives all glory to God alone with its doctrine on the nature of prayer because it teaches, secondly, that even the weakest sigh of faith is a prayer precious to God and will certainly be heard.

When the Christian can no longer speak coherently with God, when distress oppresses and torments him so much that no words come to mind; he wishes he could pray, but feels no strength to do so; he struggles, but sees no victory; yet he sighs again and again: "Oh God, oh God, help me, have mercy on me!" this is the most powerful prayer that can exist in heaven and on earth. Never does a Christian pray more truthfully and earnestly than when he feels completely powerless in his great distress. Then he is a true Israelite, wrestling with God, and he will surely be victorious.

The example of Moses at the Red Sea is a wonderful illustration of this. The people of Israel had reached the Red Sea on their exodus from Egypt. But behold! In the midst of their joy at finally having escaped the hands of their oppressors, they suddenly see Pharaoh pursuing them with a great army. Terror seizes the people. They see no way out. Moses himself cannot utter a word. And yet God calls out to him: “Why do you cry out to Me?”

Luther says the following about this wonderful story: “If despair does not come, but is a sigh, then it is the most perfect strength in the weakest weakness.” If, of course, man despairs of God's grace, then his prayer—if he still prays at all—is blasphemy. But if the Christian feels only powerlessness within himself, even if he considers his prayer to be blasphemy, but still desires to get out of this state, then that is a cry that fills heaven and earth.

Luther proves this from Moses' example when he continues in the passage we began:

> "Thus says the Lord to Moses in the second book, chapter 14, verse 15: ‘Why do you cry out to Me?’ But Moses did not cry out at all; rather, he was silent with fear; no sound of any voice was heard there; he was as if he were dead. But the Holy Spirit,

who understands the same sighing, says that it is a great cry. But how does he cry? Answer: *"Abba Pater:* Oh dear God?' There, despair is not yet complete, but there is still a little trust, a little breath, a little sigh, which is very small in your eyes, but in the ears of God it is very great, and is a cry above all cries, which fills heaven and earth, so that God cannot refrain from hearing such a cry, and must answer: ‚What are you crying for?'" (*Great Exposition of the First Book of Moses*. On Gen. 32:6-8. Walch II, Hall. A. 1099 f.; [St. L. 2, 751; AE 6:108])

The following passages serve as evidence: Psalm 10:17: “You hear the desires of the afflicted, O Lord; their hearts are confident that your ear is attentive to them”; and Romans 8:26: “We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words.”

We do not read that the lame man at Lystra, whom the holy Apostle Paul healed, expressed the desire of his heart in words. And yet he received the help he longed for. We find several more such examples in the New Testament.

That is why Valentin Ernst Löscher sings:

> “And when I can no longer speak,
> So accept my last sigh:
> God, be merciful to me, a sinner!”

**Thesis IV.** ^

Our Church teaches that grace is obtained not through the prayers of man, but solely through the Word and the Holy Sacraments, and that therefore prayer is neither a meritorious work nor a means of grace, but an exercise of faith for those already in grace, in order to recognize and obtain God's gifts of grace and all other good gifts from God.

The fourth reason why we claim that only the Lutheran Church, with its doctrine on prayer, gives all glory to God alone is that, according to its doctrine, prayer is neither a meritorious work nor a means of grace, but rather the exercise of faith by one who is already in grace.

It is well known that the Reformed sects call prayer a means of grace. The Methodists, for example, teach in their “*Doctrine and Church Order*”: "It is expected of all who wish to remain in the community that they demonstrate their desire for salvation through regular use of all the means of grace ordained by God, such as: public worship, listening to the Word of God,

whether it be read or expounded, the Lord's Supper, praying with the family and in private, searching the Scriptures, fasting, and abstinence.“ (§ 34.) ”The means of grace are either expressly prescribed in God's Word or rules of conduct based on Christian wisdom. Those prescribed in God's Word are prayer," etc. (p. 118.) (Quoted in Günther's Symbolik, 2nd ed., p. 241.)

To call prayer a means of grace does indeed have some appearance of truth. Prayer and conversion are inseparable. As long as a person does not yet pray, he still resists. But nevertheless, prayer is still not a means of grace. For a means of grace is a means by which God offers, bestows, communicates grace, or, if we already have it, confirms and seals it. But prayer does none of these things. We are not to bring down God's grace from heaven through prayer. It is already there; God is already reconciled to all people. Scripture says clearly and plainly: “If, while we were still enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life” (Rom. 5:10). “If one died for all, then all died. … For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself.” (2 Cor. 5:14, 19) In Christ, then, we all already have a reconciled God. But what must we do to become partakers of the reconciliation that Christ has already obtained for us? God himself must make it ours, and He does this through the means of grace. When the Lord Jesus sent his disciples out to gather his kingdom, he said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved.” [Mark 16:15] Here we hear what means the apostles were to use to lead the world to the enjoyment of the salvation they had obtained for them, namely, the Word of the Gospel of God's grace in Christ, which applies to all, and Holy Baptism, through which God seals to each individual whom He calls by name the word that belongs to him and which he has accepted. It is the same here as with every reconciliation. If a good friend asks my enemy for forgiveness on my behalf and obtains it, then I do not have to ask for forgiveness myself, but only believe the message of reconciliation. And I can do this all the more easily if my former enemy, so to speak, goes the extra mile and sends me a gift as a seal of his friendly disposition. — That is why the Apostle adds to his proclamation of God's accomplished reconciliation with the world in 2 Corinthians 5: “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God!” (v. 20). The apostle means to say: Now that God has been reconciled to you through Christ,

all that remains is for the enmity to be removed from your hearts. And this will happen as soon as you accept with faith the reconciliation accomplished by Christ and offered to you in the Gospel.

What, then, does the one who makes prayer a means of grace do? He denies that God has truly been reconciled with the world through Christ. And so the sects actually teach that Christ has only earned us the opportunity to obtain God's grace through our prayer, whereby man is made a contributing cause of his own salvation: because prayer is indeed a work of the Holy Spirit, but one in which man must be active.

It will soon become clear how far the enthusiasts deviate from Scripture when we notice how they apply their supposed means of grace as such in practice. They preach the law and thereby cast their listeners into hell—and that is right. But when such a poor sinner asks, “What must I do now to get out of hell and into heaven?” the Methodist answers him, “Now you must pray and struggle, and we will pray with you and for you until the feeling of peace with God blesses your heart.” But that is a thoroughly un-evangelical answer. It implies that God is not yet reconciled with the sinner, and thus denies Christ's work of reconciliation and asserts that man must now do the main thing and first reconcile himself with God, thereby making himself the cause of his own salvation.

How different is the answer given by Holy Scripture to the poor sinner's question about the way to salvation! When Paul and Silas were thrown into prison in Philippi, they were treated most cruelly by the jailer there. He inflicted every conceivable torment on them. But it is written: “About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.” Probably also the jailer, who may not have been feeling very well at the time. “Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's chains were loosed.” When the jailer realizes this, fear and terror seize him. Despair in God and man fills his heart. Like a flash of lightning, the thought flashes through his soul: You are a sinner. These men are undoubtedly messengers of God. How have you treated them?! Woe to you! So, in the fear of his soul, he takes up his sword to take his own life. But when Paul stopped him, he fell on his knees before him and his companion and asked contritely, “Dear sirs, what must I do to be saved?” If the apostles had wanted to give him a Methodist answer, they would have said something like this: "What? You

ask how you can be saved? You just took up the sword to commit suicide, and only when you saw that we were all here did you put the sword aside! You have done all kinds of evil to us holy men! You are a true hellfire. And there is still not the slightest change in you. But there is still a way out for you. Fall on your knees before God; pray, wrestle, fight, cry out until God changes your godless heart and makes it a worthy vessel of His grace." But what would have happened with such an answer? Christ and His blessed work would have been denied, and the poor man would have been cast into hell, from which he had been redeemed by Christ's precious blood. But behold! The apostles respond quite differently. They say, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you and your household will be saved.” They preached the gospel to him in all its sweetness. And that was the means of grace that would bring him salvation. That is why it goes on to say: “And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he was baptized immediately, he and all his household.” (Acts 16:23-33)

Whoever has become a damned sinner in himself deserves comfort, not because he has now become more worthy of comfort, but because he now needs comfort. For merit and worthiness do not apply here; otherwise, all people would have to be condemned. No, nothing applies here but grace, free grace.

Yes, one might say, how can one say to a godless person: Your sins are forgiven? Answer: Christ himself does this when he gives his disciples the commission to preach the gospel to all creatures. — So then, would all people, even the unbelieving wicked, be saved? one might ask. Answer: Not at all; just as little as the one who despicably rejected the hundred thalers that were offered to him can enjoy them. They were, of course, given to him as a gift. The absolution given to the hypocrite is just as powerful and certain as that given to the believer. But the former remains in his sins and in his damnation because he rejects forgiveness; the latter receives it for his salvation because he accepts it and takes comfort in it. Just as “our unbelief cannot nullify the faith of God” (Rom. 3:3), so our faith does not make the means of grace effective. These bring with them the whole treasure of grace and blessedness and, as far as God is concerned, grant it to us. But those who reject them do not have them, of course, but only bring greater wrath upon themselves, precisely because God is truly gracious to them, and yet they retain their rebellious hearts.

We see the same thing in the story of the first Christian Pentecost. When Peter's sermon had touched the hearts of his listeners, Peter did not tell them that they must now obtain God's grace through prayer, but called out to them: “Repent!” But since they already had the first part of repentance, namely remorse, he meant to say:

“Accept the gospel of Christ, in which God declares you all righteous.” And so that no one would hesitate to accept the general promises of the gospel, Peter added: “And let each one be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38)

As certain as it is that prayer is not necessary for God's sake, so that He may become gracious to us through it, it is certainly necessary for our sake, so that we may accept and firmly believe in the grace that has already been acquired for us. Prayer is therefore an exercise of faith for those who have already received grace, not a means of obtaining grace, but the gifts of grace. When we say to God, “Be gracious to me,” we do not want to make Him gracious, but we ask Him to strengthen the faith in His grace in our hearts. For prayer is a sign that faith already dwells in the heart, even if it is only a small spark; without faith it is impossible to pray. The ancients compare prayer to the crying of a newborn child. Crying does not give the child life. If it does not have life, it will not cry. But because the new life is still weak and can be extinguished all too easily, the Christian must continually ask for faith. In this sense, Luther says in his preface to the Epistle to the Romans: “Ask God to work faith in you; otherwise you will remain without faith forever; you will think and do what you want or can.”

We must now look again at the confessions of our church to see whether it also gives God the honor He deserves in this matter.

In Article II of the Epitome of the Formula of Concord (par. 13), however, it says:

> “We reject and condemn the error of the enthusiasts” (those who believe that they already carry God within themselves by nature [*εν — θεός*] and that they have an inner light without the Bible), “who claim that God draws people to himself, enlightens them, and makes them righteous and blessed without means, without hearing God's Word, and even without the use of the holy Sacraments.”

The enthusiasts of our day are similar. God's Word is good for frightening people, but it does not bring forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. To attain these things is the work of man himself. The Gospel is for them only a story that there is forgiveness of sins and that one can attain it through prayer and struggle. And now, to top it all, the sacraments! They are mere empty signs. Oh, how they rob God of all honor!

Luther speaks more extensively about this in his *House Postil*, where we read:

> "Learn here that you may be able to speak about the matter: I know

> well, and also confess, that God alone forgives sin; but I must also know how I can be sure that my sins are forgiven. Holy Scripture teaches me and all Christians that if I want forgiveness of sins, I must not sit in a corner and say, 'My God, forgive me my sin,' and then wait for an angel to come down from heaven and say to me, 'Your sins are forgiven.' For God promises that He will come down to me and himself promise me forgiveness of sins. This happens first of all in holy Baptism; for there is His command that I should be baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; and furthermore, with this command is the promise: 'Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved.' Mark. 16:16. (*House Postil*, Sermon on the 19th Sunday after Trinity. W[1] XIII, 2079 f. [St. L. 13b, 2438])

In his treatise "On the Keys," however, Luther says:

> "Do not be misled by the Pharisaical chatter with which some deceive themselves: how a man can forgive sins when he cannot give grace or the Holy Spirit. Hold fast to the words of Christ and be assured that God has no other way to forgive sin than through the spoken word, as He has commanded us human beings."

(Baptism and the Lord's Supper are also nothing other than the spoken Word. God has no other means of forgiving our sins than these. If we take the certainty of the forgiveness of sins from elsewhere, for example from the feelings of our hearts or from a supposed supernatural revelation that we believe we have had after our prayers, we are grasping at mist, and at the hour of death this foundation will disappear from under our feet. How confident, on the other hand, can be the one who draws the certainty of forgiveness of sins from the Word and the Sacrament, even in death! For this is a "foundation that stands unshakable when earth and heaven perish." Whatever his feelings may be, he may say:

> "I believe what Jesus' Word promises,
> whether I feel it or not!"
> "And even if my heart said no:
> His Word shall be more certain to me."

Therefore Luther continues:) "If you do not seek forgiveness in the **Word**, you will gaze in vain toward heaven for inner forgiveness." (The enthusiasts mock us, saying that we rely on external forgiveness, while they have internal forgiveness. But such a distinction is utter nonsense. Forgiveness is a thought that God has about us and reveals in His Word when He says: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." — "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten

Son, that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” — “God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself.” Luther continues:) "But if you say, as the evil spirits and sophists also do: ‘Many hear the keys binding and loosing, yet they do not turn to them and remain unbound and unloosed; therefore there must be something else besides the word and the keys: the Spirit, Spirit, Spirit must do it.’"

(The enthusiasts of our time cry out in exactly the same way. They reproach us for clinging to the letter, while they themselves have the Spirit. But this is simply not true. We Lutherans also have what the enthusiasts understand by spirit, namely the blessed feeling of God's peace; but we do not rely on it. Finally, the enthusiasts will have to see with horror how their mockery of us is put to shame, how they have rejected the pure water of God's Word and instead dug leaky wells that give no water. Luther therefore concludes the passage as follows:)

"But do you think that he who does not believe in the binding key is not bound? He shall well learn in his time that, because of his unbelief, the binding has not been in vain, nor has it failed. Likewise, whoever does not believe that he is **set free** and his sins forgiven shall also learn in time how certain it is that his sins have now been forgiven, and that he did not want to believe it. St. Paul says in Romans 3:3: ‘Because of your unbelief, God will not fail.’ — So we do not speak now about who believes in the keys or not; we know very well that few believe; but we speak of what the keys do and give. Those who do not accept it have nothing, of course, but the keys are not lacking because of that. Many do not believe the Gospel, but the Gospel is not lacking and does not lie because of that. A king gives you a castle: if you do not accept it, the king has not lied or failed because of that, but you have deceived yourself and it is your fault; the king has certainly given it. ... For it is God's command and word that the one speaks and the other hears; both are guilty before the salvation of their souls if they do not believe this as surely and firmly as all other articles of faith." (Writing on the Keys. 1530. XIX, 1175 f. 1177 [St. L. 19, 946 ff.; AE40:366 ff.])

Oh, if only everyone would always approach the means of grace in such a way that they could completely disregard the person of the preacher and believe: “Now God Himself is dealing with me!” How joyful and certain we would then become in our faith! —

As far as the sects' doctrine on the means of grace is concerned, in addition to the passages already quoted, a few words from the report of our district assembly of 1876 may be appropriate here. There it was noted [p. 26]:

"But even the enthusiasts create new

means of grace. All Methodists declare prayer to be one such means. But how can grace be found in something that we do? Prayer is rather an effect, a fruit of the means of grace. As long as these have not given me grace, I cannot yet pray, for I do not yet know that God is gracious to me; so long, therefore, my prayer is only empty chatter, that babbling of which the Savior says that it is peculiar to the heathen. This error of the Methodists is much more grievous than one might think. Because they experience sweet religious feelings when they pray, they think that prayer is a means of grace; they therefore consider these sweet feelings to be grace. But they confuse grace with the gift of grace, *χάρις* with *χάρισμα,* an important distinction that Luther explains in more detail in his preface to the Epistle to the Romans." —

In practice, however, certain Methodist-minded theologians in our church also make prayer a means of grace, without teaching this explicitly. These are the so-called Pietists. For example, in his "Confession and Communion Book," Joh. Phil. Fresenius advises sinners, "so that they may be thoroughly converted in a short time," to first pray for grace, then to watch over grace, and finally to contemplate God's Word. This is indeed extremely misguided advice! First, the sinner, the enemy of God, should pray, then watch (i.e., pray again), and finally, reading the Word of God should follow! It seems unbelievable, but it is really so.

Fresenius writes:

"Because all those who allow sin to rule over them are unworthy to partake of Holy Communion, they should by no means be advised to go to the Lord's table in this state of sin and God's wrath; for the Spirit of God says in 1 Corinthians 11:29: 'Whoever eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks judgment upon himself'; words of thunder that should rightly frighten every unrepentant person and keep them from the table of grace... but (they should) turn to the Lord... Since everything depends on the conversion of such sinners if they are to be able to obtain forgiveness of sins and worthily enjoy the body and blood of Jesus Christ, I will now impart some faithful instruction as to what they must observe on their part, so that they may be thoroughly converted in a short time. ... For it is essential that the sinner observe only three rules... The first rule is: Pray for grace. The second: Watch over grace. The third rule: Consider God's Word in the right way. Because the sinner cannot convert himself, he must pray for this grace. Because he can easily lose the grace he has asked for, he must watch over it. Because God's Word is the means of grace through which God enlightens us and brings about rebirth or change of

heart in adults, he must consider it in the right way. ... The first rule is therefore: whoever wants the grace of conversion must pray for this grace. However, this prayer must be different from what one was accustomed to doing before in one's prevailing sins. It must not remain a cold, foreign, and dead lip service, but must be done with great earnestness of heart. One goes into one's little room, as the Savior advises in Matthew 6:6, or wherever else one can talk to God alone, one must bow one's knees before Him and cry out with all one's strength for grace, and not only for the grace that God may forgive one's sins, but also for the grace that He may truly change one's heart and destroy the love of sin in it. And because Christ has already obtained for us the first grace of conversion, we also base this first prayer on His merit and call upon God to grant us the grace of conversion for His sake, because the Lord Jesus has paid such a dear ransom for us. This prayer is not said once or twice, but is continued daily with sighs, begging, calling, and crying out until one obtains the grace to be assured from one's own experience of the true change of heart. Here, some will think: I accept that one obtains grace when one asks in this way; but how can the sinner pray like this? Is not prayer itself already a work of divine grace, which we therefore do not have of ourselves as long as we are still dead in sins? Answer: It is true that this kind of prayer is a work of grace, which the dead sinner cannot perform by his own power; but we also know that prevenient or awakening grace often and earnestly knocks at the sinner's door to wake him from his sinful slumber. ... If he now accepts this power, it is no longer impossible for him to pray, call, and cry out as his ruin requires." (*Confession and Communion Book*. 6th edition. 1770. p. 147 ff.)

Fresenius contradicts himself here again and again. He calls prayer a work of grace, says that the sinner must be converted before he can pray, admonishes him not to come before God with cold, alien, dead lip service, but to pray with great earnestness of heart and to base his prayer solely on Christ's merit: and yet the sinner must at the same time cry out with all his might for the grace of forgiveness and conversion! According to this, man would have to ask for his conversion when he is already converted! What must now follow from such confusion of the salutary doctrine? This: that poor souls float in constant uncertainty, without certainty as to their state. They have grace, and yet they are to believe that they do not have it! They are converted,

and yet they are to ask God for their conversion! And what is most strange and incomprehensible about this is that all this “faithful advice” is given to those “who still allow sin to rule over them”! This perverse presentation is the fruit of that tiresome distinction between the awakened and the converted, which the Pietists invented.

And now another passage from our confession that prayer is an exercise of faith for those who have already been graced. In the

Large Catechism, Luther says of the Fifth Petition:

> "Therefore, it is exceedingly necessary to pray and cry out: Dear Father, forgive us our sins; not that He would not forgive our sins even without our asking (for He has given us the Gospel, in which there is complete forgiveness, before we asked for it or ever thought of it); but it is necessary that we recognize and accept such forgiveness. For because the flesh in which we live daily is such that it does not trust and believe in God, and is always stirred up with evil desires and tricks, so that we sin daily with words and deeds, with actions and burdens, our conscience is troubled, so that it fears God's wrath and displeasure and thus loses the comfort and confidence it finds in the Gospel: it is therefore necessary without ceasing to run here and seek comfort, to lift up the conscience again. " (LC III 88-89)

Our church teaches us that when we ask for forgiveness, we already have it. But because the spirit is weak and the flesh is strong, we must cry out daily, “O Lord, help us!” That is why it is so important to pray, not to obtain grace in the first place, but to recognize that Word and Sacrament have already given it to us fully and completely, and to obtain its preservation, confirmation, and increase—in a word, to obtain the gifts of grace.

So it is certain: in this too, the Lutheran Church gives all glory to God. Oh, that we might only recognize this truly and become and remain true Lutherans until our last hour. Amen! —

Unfortunately, we had to stop here due to lack of time. Because of the importance of the subject addressed in the fifth thesis, the synod resolved to ask the reverend speaker, Dr. Walther, to make his explanation of the fifth thesis available to the general public through a series of articles in *Der Lutheraner* magazine. [A search of the contents of Der Lutheraner in subsequent months and years turned up empty.]

16 [1883 Western District Convention essay by Walther] ^

# Doctrinal Proceedings.

In the spring of 1873, our district began to address the following topic in its meetings:

"That only through the doctrine of the Lutheran Church is all glory given to God alone, irrefutable proof that its teachings are the only true ones." First, in our discussions, we sought to strengthen our conviction that only those teachings that give all glory to God alone can be divine and true, and that, on the other hand, any teaching that gives the glory due to God to creatures is undoubtedly ungodly and false. Now that we have already shown in 11 important articles of faith that only the Lutheran Church gives all glory to God in its doctrine, we want to try to recognize this in these days, with God's help, in the doctrine of obedience to humans in matters of faith and conscience.

The theme for our doctrinal discussions this year is therefore:

**That only through the doctrine of the Lutheran Church is all honor given to God is also evident, in the twelfth instance, from its doctrine on obedience to men in matters of faith and conscience.**

## Thesis I.

The Lutheran Church believes, teaches, and confesses according to God's Word that no creature in heaven or on earth, but only God the Lord Himself, has the right and power to rule over the faith and conscience of Christians. James 4:12; 1 Cor. 7:23; Matt. 15:9; Gal. 5:1; John 8:36.

## Thesis II.

Not even the whole church. Eph. 5:24; Matt. 23:8, 10; 1 Cor. 7:35. (Cf. v. 8-9.)

## Thesis III.

Nor any church government, whether it be called pope, bishop, superintendent, deacon, president, or council, consistory, synod, or anything else. 1 Cor. 3:21–23; Matt. 20:25–27; 15:1–9; Acts 15:28.

17 [1883 Western District Convention essay by Walther]

## Thesis IV.

Nor any individual congregation, much less a majority of its members. 2 Tim. 4:3; Ex. 23:2.

## Thesis V.

Nor any governing body of an individual congregation, whether it be called a presbytery, elders, church council, church senate, presbytery, or the like. (1 Tim. 5:17; 4:14; 1 Cor. 12:28.) Acts 21:18–22. (Cf. Thesis III.)

## Thesis VI.

Nor any preacher. A. He is not a lord, but a servant of the congregation. (1 Cor. 3:5; 2 Cor. 1:24; 1 Pet. 5:3; Col. 4:17; 3 John 9-10) B. He must have his teaching examined and judged by the congregation. (1 Thess. 5:21; 1 Cor. 10:15; Acts 17:10, 11; John 4:39–42; 7:49; Matt. 7:15; 1 John 4:1; Rom. 16:17-18) C. He may not command anything that Christ has not commanded. (Matt. 20:25–28; 2 Cor. 8:8, 4:5; cf. Luke 10:16; Heb. 13:17; Matt. 23:2-3.) D. He has no power to determine or act arbitrarily in matters that concern the whole congregation. (Matthew 18:17; 1 Corinthians 5:1–5, 13; 2 Corinthians 2:6–10; Acts 6:1 ff.; 1 Corinthians 14:40).

## Thesis VII.

Nor any secular authority. It cannot compel its subjects by external force to do what it considers to be the true faith and right worship, nor can it prohibit and punish what it considers to be false faith and false worship, if the teaching of its subjects is not seditious. Matthew 22:21; Acts 4:18, 19; 5:29; Daniel 3:28; 6:10; Exodus 12:45, 48; Matthew 13:24–29; 1 Samuel 22:17.

## Thesis VIII.

Nor any domestic rule. Householders and parents have no power to compel their spouses, adult children, or servants to embrace the right or wrong faith. 1 Corinthians 7:13–16; Deuteronomy 33:9; Matthew 10:34–37; 1 Samuel 20:30.

The connection between these theses is easy to see. The first thesis actually contains everything that is said in the following seven; strictly speaking, the latter are not parallel to it, but subordinate to it. But this logical irregularity of the theses is balanced by the advantage of greater clarity that is achieved as a result.

18 [1883 Western District Convention essay by Walther]

In short, what is the subject matter of these theses? It is freedom of conscience as opposed to domination of conscience or tyranny of conscience. Let us therefore first answer these two questions: What is meant by conscience? What is meant by tyranny of conscience?

Conscience is not, as is commonly believed, the moral law written in the heart of man at his creation, of which a small remnant remains after the Fall. It is more than that. Romans 2:15 says of the heathen that their conscience bears witness to them, as do their thoughts, which accuse or excuse them. According to this, conscience is a secret witness in the heart; it is an inner voice created in man and remaining even after the Fall, which either warns, punishes, "accuses," condemns him when he does something in thought, word, or deed that he knows to be wrong, or "excuses" him, acquits him, when he does what he believes to be right. If conscience were the moral law itself that remained in man, then man could not sin as long as he followed his conscience; then conscience could not err. But in a certain sense, one can quite rightly speak of an erring conscience. The Indian makes it a matter of conscience, considers it a sin to refrain from private blood revenge, which God has forbidden. The Catholic makes it a matter of conscience to refrain from eating meat on Friday, which is not a sin according to God's Law. Both have an erring conscience. But where does this error of conscience come from? It comes from the fact that, after the Fall, conscience lacks the right foundation, namely, the right knowledge of God and His will. The natural man knows well that there is a God who is the Lord, whose servants we are, and to whom we are therefore responsible for all our deeds. But the knowledge of what pleases this God is not only clouded in fallen man, but in many cases completely extinguished; false ideas, reinforced and multiplied by false education and examples, have taken their place. Therefore, Romans 1:18 says that the heathen have "suppressed the truth"—the knowledge of God and His will that was created in them—in unrighteousness, and therefore God has given them over to blindness, so that their conscience no longer condemns them even for the most terrible sins. We see from this that the reason why the conscience often makes a false judgment lies not in the conscience itself, but in the lack of knowledge from which the conscience judges good and evil. And in this respect, one can well say: Conscience cannot err. For it never errs in testifying that one is guilty of doing what one considers right and of refraining from what one considers wrong, and therefore, depending on a person's behavior, it sometimes accuses him and sometimes excuses him.

Hence it follows that a person sins every time he acts against his conscience or does something with a doubtful conscience, thus running the risk that it might be a sin.

What, then, does it mean to rule over the conscience of another? What constitutes the rule of conscience or the tyranny of conscience? It consists in one person 1) either by force compelling another to believe or do what his conscience declares to be false and wrong, and to reject or refrain from doing what he considers to be true and right; or 2) compelling another to do so by virtue of his supposed authority, office, and prestige. The former form of tyranny of conscience was once practiced by the Jews (Saul, Acts 26:11) and the pagans in their persecution of Christians, as well as by the papists in their persecution of the faithful witnesses of the truth. An example of the latter form of tyranny of conscience is given to us by the high council in Jerusalem, which cried out to the apostles: “Have we not commanded you with authority” — we, they want to say, who are appointed to this office and dignity by God — “that you should not teach in this name?” It is most commonly found in the papacy. When Luther once stood before Cardinal Cajetan, the latter did not want to engage in any dispute with him, but only demanded, in the name of the Church, to which Luther must submit, the single word “*Revoco*,” “I recant.” And the same thing happened at the Diet of Worms. But Luther did not recant. Why not? Because, he said, among other things, it is “neither safe nor wise to do anything against one's conscience.” (XV, 2308; [StL 15, 1926; AE 32:112])

Finally, there is a third type of domination of conscience, which is the most common and dangerous. It consists in making one's reason or carnal desires the master of one's conscience and seeking to dampen and drown out its warnings and admonitions with self-made excuses. For a time, this may succeed. But, as Luther says, the little dog in one's bosom always begins to bark again. And woe to those who do not heed this barking before death! However, we are not concerned here with this last type of domination of conscience, but with the first two.

After these preliminary remarks, it will be understandable what our first thesis means when it states:

## Thesis I.

**The Lutheran Church believes, teaches, and confesses according to God's Word that no creature in heaven or on earth, but God the Lord Himself alone, has the right and power to rule over the faith and conscience of Christians.**

**James 4:12. 1 Cor. 7: 23. Matt. 15:9. Gal. 5:1. 1 John 8:36.**

20 [1883 Western District Convention essay by Walther]

Our church believes, teaches, and confesses this “according to God's Word.” For it is written first

James 4:12: “There is one lawgiver who can save and condemn.” A human lawgiver cannot save and condemn, depending on whether his commandments are kept or transgressed. God alone can give commandments whose fulfillment opens heaven to us and whose transgression casts us into hell. Therefore, God declared at the very beginning of His lawgiving: “I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God; you shall have no other gods before me.” Anyone who seeks to bind the consciences of men with laws other than God's commandments therefore encroaches on God's office, practices idolatry himself, and leads others into idolatry.

Furthermore, Paul says to the Corinthians

1 Cor. 7:23: “You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.” The latter half of the saying refers specifically and primarily to physical slavery. But most theologians rightly find here, as in other passages dealing with something specific, a general truth expressed, cf. Romans 14:22-23, namely, the truth that a Christian should not allow anyone to become lord over his conscience.

Matthew 15:9: “In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” A powerful word from our Savior, which declares all self-chosen and man-made works, however difficult they may be, to be in vain, to be a vain mockery of the great God; thus, judgment also falls on those who impose such works on Christians as necessary for salvation.

This also includes all passages that deal with Christian freedom. For example:

Gal. 5:1: “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”

John 8:36: “If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”

Christ paid a high ransom to obtain for us not only freedom from the curse and compulsion of the moral law, but also freedom from the ceremonial law and from all human laws imposed on the conscience. What a sin it is when man wants to enslave again those whom God himself has set free through suffering and death! No creature can or may do this.

This is what the Lutheran Church believes, teaches, and confesses.

Apology of the Augsburg Confession: “The Holy Scriptures and the apostles have gone through it briefly and dismissed it all with a single stroke, stating clearly and plainly that we are free in Christ from all traditions” (i.e., from all “human statutes”). (Art. 15. Of human statutes in the

Church. St. Louis edition, p. 157 a. [Ap XV(VIII) 34-36]) Previously, the Apology had said that pious people, in order to ease their consciences, had sought all kinds of relief from the strict commands of the church and the pope; but that had not been enough; the apostles had done as Alexander had done, who had simply cut the indissoluble Gordian knot with his sword. They had “quit” everything so that no guilt remained. [Ap XV(Viii) 34]

Formula of Concord: "Likewise, it is also to be done concerning the article of Christian liberty, which the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of the holy apostle, has so earnestly commanded his church to maintain, as is now heard. For as soon as it is weakened and human commandments are imposed on the church by force as necessary, as if failure to observe them were wrong and sinful, the way is already prepared for idolatry, whereby human commandments are subsequently multiplied and held not only equal to the commandments of God, but even placed above them." (Thorough Repetition. Art. 10. St. L. A. S. 475. [FC SD X 15])

Luther: "What God sets free and does not banish, no angel or creature shall bind or forbid, on pain of losing their salvation. And whoever does not abide by such divine freedom and follows those who bind, will go to the devil together with those who bind, as he who has fallen into God's law and government has committed *crimen laesae summae majestatis* (a crime of high treason)." (Letter to Joh. v. Schleinick, 1523, concerning the marriage of a fellow godfather. X, 839 [StL 10, 708])

The same: "Where there is a doing or leaving undone that God has neither taught, commanded, nor forbidden, one should leave it free. But whoever goes beyond this and commands or forbids, falls into God's own office, burdens consciences, causes sin and misery, and destroys everything that God has given freely and securely, and drives away the Holy Spirit with all his kingdom, work, and word, so that only the devil remains." (Against the Heavenly Prophets. 1525. XX, 128; [StL 20, 84-85 ; AE 40:129])

The same: “God cannot and will not allow anyone to rule over the soul except himself alone.” (On Secular Authority, How Far One Owes Obedience to It. 1523. X, 452 [StL 10, 395-396; AE 45:105])

That our church rejects all domination of people's consciences is also clear from its description of Christian freedom. Cf. the section of the Formula of Concord just quoted.

The Lutheran theologian Brochmand gives the following description of Christian freedom: “Christian freedom is the liberation from spiritual bondage acquired through Christ's blood, through which those who believe in the only begotten Son of God are free from the curse of the law, from the bondage of sin, from the yoke of Mosaic

ceremonies, and from the burden of human statutes before God in conscience." (*Univers. th. system. Tom*. II, 520.)

However, the Papists define the essence of Christian freedom quite differently.

Ägidius Hunnius says of this: "The Jesuit Tanner says of Gal. 5:1 that this passage refers to the bondage of the Mosaic law, to which the apostle does not want Christians to be subject. The poor man has nothing more to add to this. But it is too narrow a description of Christian freedom if it is described solely as liberation from the yoke of slavery under the Mosaic Law. What kind of liberation from bondage would it be if you freed your serf, but only to hand him over to another master who imposed an even heavier yoke of bondage on him? The observance of so many ceremonies under the Levitical law, so many celebrations, so many ablutions, so many sacrifices, and many other customs was a heavy yoke. But under the papacy, the Christian people are burdened with far more additions, customs, and ceremonies, all of which are presented as matters of conscience, with the opinion of necessity and worship, for observance. ... The nature of the freedom acquired by Christ, which the apostle extols in that passage, does not suffer such tyranny. Nor is anyone authorized, except by the commandments which we read in the New Testament are prescribed, to impose anything else on the conscience in matters of faith and religion." (*Anti-Tannerus c. V. Opp. Tom. II*, fol. 507.)

In order to cast suspicion on the freedom from human statutes which the Lutheran Church believes, teaches, and professes, the papists portrayed Luther as a man full of carnal desires for freedom, who gained followers only by preaching to unrestrained people: "Do what you will; the Gospel covers everything!" Thus he gathered a following. But as much as Luther insisted on freedom from human statutes, he insisted just as much on freedom from human statutes. unrestrained people through his preaching: "Do what you want; the Gospel covers everything!" However, as much as Luther insisted on freedom from human laws, he insisted just as much on the binding nature of divine law and often enough explained in the clearest terms what kind of freedom he stood for. He says, among other things: "A Christian is bound by no law except the divine law." (Booklet from the Babylonian Prison of the Church. 1520. XIX, 92; [StL 19, 75; AE 36:76]) "Only for this freedom and conscience do I cry out, and cry out confidently, that no law can be imposed on Christians with any right, neither by men nor by angels, as much as they want. For we are free from all." (Ibid. p. 86 [StL 19, 70; AE 36:72])

But just as it is a grave sin to want to rule over consciences with human statutes, so it is also false humility to submit to human commandments. What

Luther says applies here: "Dear friend, do not let it be a small thing to forbid what God does not forbid, to break Christian freedom, which cost Christ his blood, to burden consciences with sins where there are none. Whoever does this and is allowed to do it may also do all evil, yes, he thereby denies everything that God is, teaches, and does, together with his Christ... Therefore, listen, my brother, you know that we must stake our lives and bodies on Christian freedom, as on every article of faith, and do everything that is commanded [by men] against it, as St. Paul teaches in Galatians 5... Not that it is necessary for your conscience, but that it is necessary to profess Christian freedom and not to allow the devil to make a commandment, prohibition, sin, or conscience where God does not want any. But if you allow such sin to be made, there is no longer Christ to take it away. For with such a conscience one denies the true Christ, who takes away all sin. Therefore, you see how in these small things there is no small danger if one wants to affect the conscience with them. ... Where people want to make commandments, prohibitions, sins, good works, conscience, and danger, where God wants freedom and commands and prohibits nothing, you must hold fast to such freedom and always do the opposite until you obtain freedom. Thus Paul did not want to let Titus be circumcised, Gal. 2:3, since they insisted and wanted to make it necessary, and yet he circumcised Timothy, Acts 16:3, since they did not insist." (From the Heavenly Prophets. 1525. XX, 278. f. [StL 20, 206 f.; AE 40:151 ff.])

However, it follows from this doctrine—and we must also point this out—that it by no means implies freedom to disrupt and despise all established orders, as some believe. Christian freedom is often understood in this way, but this is a serious misunderstanding. If, for example, someone were to come to a congregation where he found all kinds of ceremonies and orders that he did not like because he was not accustomed to them, it would be thoroughly unchristian to say: "Your teaching is right and good, but I want nothing to do with your customs and orders. Away with such human commandments! I will not submit to any human being.“ No, one should only speak this way if the church were to exercise control over people's consciences with its rules and say, for example, ”These institutions were created by the church, by holy men; they must not be abandoned under any circumstances." But as long as a church regards its rules as free means and desires that they be observed only for the sake of love and peace, then a Christian should also willingly comply with his brothers in this for the sake of love and peace. Both are equally important, as Luther made the subject of his “Sermon on the Freedom of a Christian” in 1520: “A Christian is a free lord over all things; a Christian is a

servant of all things and subject to everyone.” (XIX, 1207 [StL 19, 988; AE 31:344]) He is a “free lord” before God in conscience, a “servant” to his neighbor in life.

Luther therefore writes quite rightly: "So in all other external statutes of things that are free in themselves and not contrary to faith or love, one should make the distinction that one should keep them out of love and freedom, to please others with whom one is, so that one may agree and conform with them. But if they insist that one must and should keep them out of obedience, as necessary for salvation, then one should abandon everything and do the opposite, to prove that nothing is necessary for a Christian except faith and love; everything else should be freely kept and abandoned according to the demands of society. For to keep such things out of love and freedom does no harm, but to keep them out of necessity and obedience is damnable. This should also be understood in ceremonies, singing, prayers, and all other church ordinances, as long as one does such things out of love and freedom; one should only keep them for the service and will of the community that is there, where it is not otherwise a bad thing in itself. But if one insists that it must be so, one should immediately desist and act against it in order to preserve the freedom of faith." (Kirchenpostille, Epistle Part XII, 11, 7. f. St. L. 87.)

This same freedom from every human yoke that we Christians enjoy with regard to freedom from all human laws, is also freedom from all the human teachings. The world often accuses Christians of being pitiful servants of the clergy; they must accept as true all the irrational superstitions that are proclaimed to them by their preachers as divine revelation. They, on the other hand, are free people. But what is the reality? The exact opposite is the case. It is precisely the children of this world who are slaves to their prophets of wisdom. They believe the greatest absurdities, as long as they are uttered by a learned and famous man. Christians, on the other hand, can truly boast that they are the true free men, who do not submit to human opinions and believe only in the infallible words of Christ. And above all, it is our beloved Lutheran Church that rejects all blind superstition with great seriousness, granting no right or power to any angel, let alone any human being, to establish new articles of faith (Gal. 1:8, 1 John 4:1), thus giving God the honor that is due to him alone and denying it to every creature.

And—we may confess to God's praise—our Missouri Synod has remained faithful to the divine Word and the Lutheran Confessions in this regard as well. For a quarter of a century, it has fought publicly for this doctrine and suffered much shame for its sake.

25 [1883 Western District Convention essay by Walther]

“Freedom for every Christian!” “Freedom for every congregation!” This was written on its banner from the beginning and remains there today. But how? Doesn't the formation of a synod already stand in the way of this? Not at all! Unfortunately, there are many synods whose constitution robs both individual members and the congregations that belong to them of many aspects of their Christian freedom. Our synod, on the other hand, would deny itself, indeed, abandon itself, as soon as it sought in any way to rule over the consciences of its members. For our synod constitution stipulates, among other things, the following for all time:

"The synod is only an advisory body with regard to the self-government of the individual congregations. Therefore, no decision of the former, if it imposes something on the individual congregation as a synodical decision, has binding force for the latter. — Such a synodical decision can only be binding if the individual congregation has voluntarily accepted and confirmed it by a formal congregational resolution. — If a congregation finds that the decision is not in accordance with the Word of God or is unsuitable for its circumstances, it has the right to disregard or reject the decision." (Chap. IV. A. § 9. Synod Handbook p. 7.)

Far from endangering the freedom of conscience of those who join our synod, our synod guarantees this freedom to them in its constitution immediately upon their entry before the whole world, and in the event that our synod should ever knowingly attempt to enforce other principles, it has already called upon all its members, preachers, teachers, and congregations, to leave it as a hypocrite and apostate. The theme of the first speech given in our synod in 1848 was that our synod “has no power other than the power of the Word”; should it ever presume to claim any other, it may retain the name “Missouri Synod,” but it will no longer be the Missouri Synod.

## Thesis II.

## Therefore, not even the whole church.

**Eph. 5:24; Matt. 23:8, 10; 1 Cor. 7:35 (cf. vv. 8-9).**

In relation to the first thesis, this second thesis explains that if no creature, then neither the entire church has the right or power to rule over the faith and conscience of Christians. For it is quite natural to think that the whole Christian church, the communion of saints, or at least the apostolic church, must be granted such a right and such power.

However, far from attributing such authority to themselves, the holy apostles did everything in their power to prevent their high position in the church from giving rise to domination over conscience within it. It is a completely wrong conclusion to infer from the Savior's words to his disciples, "He who hears you hears me, and whoever despises you despises me,“ one wants to prove that the apostles or even ”their successors" in the preaching office have been given the power to command something binding on the conscience that God has not already commanded. Certainly, when the holy apostles preached Christ's Word, they were Christ's voice, and when one heard them, it was no less than hearing Christ himself; whoever despised them and rejected their word despised and rejected Christ himself and rejected His Word. But when they established external orders and institutions, when, for example, they organized the office of almsgiving (Acts 6:1-6), when the apostle Paul advised young people not to marry during the time of persecution (1 Cor. 7:25-28), when he ordered that women should appear in worship with their heads covered (1 Cor. 11: 4 ff.), when he called for a collection for the needy congregation in Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8 and 9), when the synod in Jerusalem required the Gentile Christians to abstain from idol sacrifices, blood, and strangled animals (Acts 15:28-29): they always expressly refrained from imposing a burden on anyone's conscience or “throwing a noose around the neck” of Christians (1 Cor. 7:35) or commanding anything (2 Cor. 8:8); they present the reasons why they consider such rules to be good, distinguishing between what is “the Lord's command” and what is only their “opinion” (1 Cor. 7:10-12, 40; 2 Cor. 8:10). It is the Antichrist who says: What the holy Christian church ordains must be obeyed. We say according to God's Word: A church that makes binding rules is not the holy Christian church, for the latter recognizes only Christ as its sole Lord and Master.

God's Word testifies to this clearly and unambiguously in the two passages cited:

Eph. 5:24: “The church” (i.e., the congregation) “is subject unto Christ”; it would never even occur to her to set herself beside Christ and want to make binding laws, equivalent to divine commandments, which God has not given.

Matt. 23:10: “Neither be ye called Masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.”

The Papists in particular claim that the church has the right and power to make binding laws. With their so-called traditions, that is, oral traditions of the teachings

and commandments of the church, they engage in the most shameful deception. As soon as something new is to be introduced that contradicts God's Word, it is declared to be part of tradition; hence Luther aptly calls it “the Holy Father's bag of tricks,” from which he pulls out whatever he pleases. Therefore, the

Apology of the Augsburg Confession states: "The adversaries also condemn this part of the seventh article, since we have said that it is sufficient for the unity of the church that the same gospel and the same sacraments be administered, and that it is not necessary for human statutes to be uniform everywhere. These passages thus allow that it is not necessary for the unity of the church that *traditiones particulares* (the special, not general statutes) be the same; but that *traditiones universales* (the general ones) be the same is necessary for the true unity of the church. ... The opponents say that for this reason such statutes, especially the universal ceremonies, must be observed, for it is probable that they were handed down to us by the apostles. O how great, holy, excellent, apostolic people! How pious and spiritual they have now become! They want to keep the statutes and ceremonies established by the apostles, as they say, but they do not want to keep the apostles' teaching and clear words! But we say, and know that it is right: One should teach, judge, and speak of all the statutes in this way and no other, for as the apostles themselves taught in their writings; but the apostles fight most strongly and vehemently everywhere, not only against those those who want to exalt human statutes, but also against those who wanted to regard the divine law, the ceremonies of circumcision, etc., as necessary for salvation. The apostles in no way wanted to place such a burden on consciences that such statutes concerning certain days, fasting, food, and the like should be sinful if one did not keep them; and, what is more, Paul clearly calls such teachings devilish teachings.“ (Ap VII and VIII 30, 38-40)

The same: ”The apostles ordained many things for the sake of good discipline in the church, which have changed over time, and did not make statutes that they should be necessary or remain forever." (Ap XXVIII 16)

Formula of Concord: “We believe, teach, and confess that the congregation of God in every place and at every time has the power to change such ceremonies as may be most useful and edifying to the congregation of God.” (FC Ep X 4)

Of course, the church can bind Christians even less to new articles of faith than to laws. Our confession rejects such an undertaking in the

Smalcald Articles: “It is not valid to make articles of faith out of the

work or words of the holy fathers... It is said: God's Word shall constitute articles of faith, and no one else, not even an angel." (SA II II 15)

All true Lutherans therefore also testify wholeheartedly with the

Formula of Concord: "We also confess to the same first Unaltered Augsburg Confession, not because it was formulated by our theologians, but because it is taken from God's Word and is firmly and well founded therein." (FC SD, Rule and Norm, 5; emphasis Walther's)

Now, in the latest doctrinal dispute, they want to bind our consciences with certain statements and explanations of later Lutheran dogmatists about the doctrine of election by grace, which are not based on God's Word. It is God's grace that has preserved us in the hour of temptation—without in any way diminishing the deserved reputation of those enlightened men of God—from following them even where they deviated from God's Word. And so, through this doctrinal dispute, God has once again cleansed us of the accusation so often made against us in the past that we were blind followers of Hunnius, Gerhard, Quenstedt, and other theologians, because we had often thrown their arguments, which were in accordance with God's Word and the confession, in the faces of the opponents of truth. The Ohio Synod has succumbed to temptation. It has made the pronouncements of the "fathers" its confession and even demands that its parishioners follow them in this, thus leading them to blind faith. For how are they to convince themselves of what the "fathers" wrote in their numerous Latin writings, since the vast majority of them are ignorant of the Latin language? Let them now call us arrogant people who despised the great theologians of the 17th century: we do not want to be subject to the church, let alone individual teachers of the same, but only to Christ, and we want to make others subject to him, and therefore we always ask: "What is written?"

Luther therefore writes: "We do obey the apostles and the Church, **insofar as they bring that man's sign,** since He says to them in Mark 16:15: ' *Ego mitto vos, ite et praedicate evangelium*' (I send you, go and preach the gospel'; for this is the sign of that man, Christ), "and above all: '*Docete eos, quae mandavi vobis*!'" (Teach them to keep all that I have commanded you, nothing else). "Where they do not bring the sign, we do not listen to them any further, for St. Paul Gal. 2:11. Petrum hörete" (namely that we punish them as hypocrites); "no amount of shouting will help, we will do no differently." (On the Private Mass and Ordination of Priests. 1533. XIX, 1504 [StL 19, 1234-1235; AE 38:161-62; emphases Walther's])

Chemnitz expresses himself just as decisively: "If anyone had wanted to attribute to the apostles, while they were still alive in the flesh,

that they had divine authority to give laws of which they had no commandment or testimony from the divine Word, indeed, that they could reestablish what Christ had abolished or abolish what he had instituted: they would undoubtedly have shown with a loud voice and by tearing their clothes that they neither recognized nor approved of it." (*Examen Conc. Trid. De bon. opp*. 179.)

The same: “Paul distinguishes precisely between that which they (the apostles) have an express commandment from God and that which he himself determined according to his apostolic spirit. For he adds: ‘Not that I am laying any restraint on you.’ 1 Cor. 7:35.” (*Examen Conc. Trid*. f. 180.)

Luther: "The Christian church has no power to establish any articles of faith, has never done so, and will never do so. The Christian church has no power to establish any commandments of good works, has never done so, and will never do so... The Christian church has no power to confirm articles of faith or good works or the Gospels and Holy Scripture as a judge or sovereign, has never done so, and will never do so. ... The Christian church has the power to establish customs and practices to be observed in fasting, celebrations, eating, drinking, clothing, waking, and the like; but not over others without their will, but only over itself, has never done otherwise, and will never do otherwise; also that such customs do not strive against the articles or good works, that is, that they are without harm to faith and love; also that they do not confuse or burden consciences; also that they do not remain forever, but may be left behind and mitigated at any time for reasons. “ (Article on the Power of the Christian Church. 1530. XIX, 1190—92 [StL 19, 958 ff.; ])

Chemnitz refutes the false teaching of the papists as follows: ”The 8th canon of the Council of Trent on Baptism reads: 'If anyone says that the baptized are free from all commandments of the holy church, whether written or taught orally, so that one is not obliged to observe them if one does not wish to submit to them voluntarily, let him be anathema!’ — This canon has taken the opinion it condemns from Luther's writing ‘On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church’. But on this subject, Luther asserts the following. When we are accepted by God as his children through Baptism and are taken into His family and incorporated into it, then we are bound to obey God, but according to his commandments, not according to human statutes and commandments. For after instituting Baptism,

Christ adds in Matthew 28:20: “Teach them to observe all that I have commanded you.” James says in chapter 4:12: “There is one lawgiver who can save and condemn.” And in Matthew 15:9, the Lord says: “They do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” From these scriptural grounds, Luther freely and correctly concludes: Because God, in His great house, which is the Church, reserves alone the right and power to govern the consciences of his servants, indeed, of his children, through His Word, and because we have bound ourselves in Baptism to obedience to this householder, who has also freed and acquitted our consciences from all human statutes, commandments, and teachings, as the scriptures clearly testify: therefore (says Luther) neither the pope nor any human being has the right to impose a single syllable on the conscience of a Christian; but whatever happens otherwise is done out of a tyrannical spirit against the freedom of the church; for nothing can be imposed on the consciences of Christians by any law, whether by men or by angels." (*Examination of the Council of Trent* [cf. Kramer translation, 2:150-51])

When the papists attribute to the church the right and power to impose binding human laws on Christians, they invoke, among other things, the lofty names that Scripture gives to the church. The Church is called “a pillar and foundation of truth,” the “house and temple of God,” a “light and city on the mountain,” “bride, body of Christ,” and the like. But Ephesians 5:24 already forbids drawing that conclusion: “The Church is subject to Christ, as the wife is to her husband.” And precisely because, and only because, the Church alone accepts and proclaims Christ's commandments, it bears those great names, and therefore denies them as soon as it places itself in Christ's place by demanding obedience to its human laws. Then this must also be considered: if the whole Church had the power to make laws, then those who obeyed would have to be outside the Church, that is, non-Christians. Or only the apostolic Church would have had this power; then only it would have been the Church, but now there would be no Church anymore. Or finally, the Church of one age would always have to leave laws to the Church of the following age; then it would always remain doubtful who the Church was and who were the obedient ones. —

But if we look around the Church of the present, we find even in most communions that call themselves Lutheran not only the papist practice of controlling consciences, but also the papist doctrine of ecclesiastical power. The words “He who hears you hears me” are interpreted by the statutes and doctrines of the church, which is always said to be the bearer of Christ's will. It is taught that obedience is owed to the governing church by virtue of the fourth commandment, provided that it does not command sin. It is therefore an inexpressible grace

of God that such a large number of preachers and congregations among us stand firm in the one sense, allowing their consciences to be bound only by God's Word and being subject to no one other than Christ alone. Only three times since the existence of the Christian Church has there been such a blessed time: at the time of the apostles, at the time of the Reformation, and now. No sooner had the apostles fallen silent than the sad enslavement of Christians began. Even the dear martyr Ignatius († 107) was allowed to write publicly: “As Christ is among the apostles, so is the bishop among the presbyters.” The papacy then crowned the tyranny of conscience. Through Luther, the grace of God broke this yoke of bondage and brought Christians to the knowledge and enjoyment of their freedom. And when this treasure was lost again through the sloth of Christians, God allowed apostolically free churches to arise once more. Therefore, without pride, giving all glory to God alone, we call out: “Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown!”

## Thesis III.

## Nor any church government, whether it be called pope, bishop, superintendent, deacon, president, or council, consistory, synod, or anything else.

**1 Cor. 3:21–23. Matt. 20:25–27. 15:1–9. Acts 15:28.**

It goes without saying that Christians, if they are not subject to the whole church, can be even less subject to a single person or a collegium in the church, whatever its title may be. But even those who reject the former claim the latter. Therefore, we must also address this. God's Word speaks clearly on this matter.

1 Corinthians 3:21–23: “Therefore let no one boast in men. For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.” In the Corinthian church, people made evil distinctions among the apostles, and this had given rise to divisions. Therefore, the apostle not only testifies that there is no difference among the apostles in terms of authority, but also adds: “All things are yours,” given to you by God for your service and for your good; the special gifts of individual members and officers in the church are the property of the church. We conclude from this that there is no one in the church who can boast of special power and privileges over others. Finally, the

apostle adds: “But you are Christ's”; he means to say: Not Paul's, not Peter's, not Apollos', in short, no man's; Christ alone is your Lord.

Matthew 20:25-27: “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave.” Rule and authority belong to the state, not to the church. There are no “princes of the church,” no “spiritual authority.” Grabau once wanted to evade the passage in 1 Peter 5:3: “Not as those who rule over the people,” by claiming that this referred only to tyrannical rule; a certain degree of rule and authority, namely in matters of means, was, however, indeed a right of preachers. But Christ puts this interpretation to shame and says: Every kind of human rule and power belongs to the worldly realm. In the church, only Christ's word may rule. The power of the church servants consists only in serving, namely in serving the Word.

In Matthew 15:1-9, Christ rejects the writings of the Jewish elders, which had ultimately come to be not only equated with God's Word, but even placed above God's Word, and therefore transgressed God's commandment in order to uphold those writings. How close this danger is can be seen from the history of the Church.

Acts 15:28: “It seems good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these necessary things.” This passage is often cited as proof that the synod at least has the power to make binding rules in external matters, for whatever the synod decides is also pleasing to the Holy Spirit. However, it does not say: It pleases us and therefore also the Holy Spirit, but rather the opposite: it pleases the Holy Spirit and therefore also us.

If ever a church government had power over the consciences of Christians, it would certainly have been the college of apostles. But we have already seen how faithfully they obeyed their Lord's Word that they should not behave like worldly rulers. That is why the

Smalcald Articles say: "1 Cor. 3:6 Paul makes all church ministers equal and teaches that the church is above its ministers. Therefore, it cannot be said with any truth that Peter had any authority or power over the other apostles, over the church, or over all other church ministers. For he says, ‘All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas,’ that is, neither Peter nor other ministers of the Word may assign any authority or supremacy over the church to them. No one should burden the church with his own statutes, but here it should be said that no authority or prestige is valid except the Word of God." [Tr 11]

This statement does not seem to be relevant at all. For who would think of wanting to raise his prestige above God's Word? But in fact, the preacher who claims a higher power and prestige than others actually places his commandments above God's Word; he says to the others, as it were: You have only the power of the Word, but I have another, higher power. It is an equally futile excuse to claim that the Augsburg Confession only rejects the idea of establishing rules as if they were “necessary for salvation” (XXVIII 56). Grabau, for example, said: It does not occur to us to want to bind salvation to our church statutes; that would certainly be un-Lutheran. But he did not consider that by wilfully violating one's conscience, even if that conscience is bound by human commandments, one forfeits one's salvation; that therefore, whenever one binds one's conscience to something, one also truly binds one's salvation to it. —

The passage from the Smalcald Articles quoted above continues: "One must not elevate Cephas' authority above that of the other apostles, as they used to say at the time: Cephas holds this view, and he is the most distinguished of the apostles, therefore Paul and the others should also hold this view. No, says Paul, and he strips Peter of this little hat, that his prestige and authority should be higher than that of the other apostles or the church. Christ gives the highest and final judgment to the church, saying, ‘Tell the church.’" (Tr 11)

One might ask: But did not the apostles themselves appoint bishops and grant them greater authority than pastors? How, then, can one speak against such a bishopric and a church government endowed with higher authority by God himself?

Let us hear what the Smalcald Articles say about this: "Therefore Jerome also says in Hellenic words that *episcopi* (bishops) and *presbyteri* (elders or pastors) are not distinguished, but that all parish priests are both bishops and priests, and he alleges the text of Paul *ad Tit*. 1, where he writes to Titus: ‘I left you in Crete for this reason, that you should appoint priests in every city,’ and subsequently calls them bishops: ‘A bishop must be the husband of one wife.’ Thus Peter and John call themselves *presbyteros* or priests. Jerome Weiler then says: "But that one alone is chosen, the other under him, has happened in order to prevent division, lest one here and another there should draw a church to himself and the communion should thus be torn apart. For in Alexandria (he says), from Mark the Evangelist to Heraclamus and Dionysius, the presbyters have always chosen one of their number and held him in higher esteem, calling him *episcopum* (bishop), just as a military force chooses one of its number as captain; just as the

deacons choose one of their number who is skilled in this office and call him archideacon. For tell me, what more does a bishop do than any presbyter, except that he ordains others to church office, etc. Here Jerome teaches that such a distinction between bishops and parish priests has come about solely from human order, as can also be seen in the work. For the office and command are quite the same, and it is only the ordination that has made the difference between bishops and parish priests; for it has been arranged that a bishop also in other churches ordains people to the preaching office. But since according to divine law there is no difference between bishops and pastors or parish priests, it is beyond doubt that when a parish priest ordains several capable persons to church offices in his church, such *ordinatio* is valid and right according to divine law." (Tr 62-65)

It should therefore be noted that in the early Christian church, bishop and presbyter or elder were names for one and the same office, namely that of all pastors. It was only later that a distinction was made between bishops and presbyters, when one of the presbyters gained more prestige and authority than the others under human law and was therefore called bishop, while the others retained the name presbyter, from which our German word "*Priester*" originated.

The otherwise strictly state church theologian Calov writes: "In the administration of church offices, there are indeed levels with regard to order, but not with regard to jurisdiction; however, there is a difference between the Old and New Testaments in this respect. For there (in the Old Testament) there was a certain ecclesiastical jurisdiction, e.g., Aaron's over the priests, Levites, and doorkeepers; but we do not admit that there is an ecclesiastical jurisdiction in the New Testament which is divine law, except for the general one that everything should be orderly and honest in the church. However, according to a human and positive (first established by humans) law, the lord of the territory exercises jurisdiction, either alone through consistories, or also through superintendents, such as perhaps Titus was in Crete, or in whatever other way may be deemed appropriate, as long as the propriety of order is not violated." (*System. locc. th. Tom*. VIII, 288.) Jurisdiction means the power to command anything by virtue of one's office. No bishop is entitled to this.

Luther: "A bishop, as bishop" (that is, because he is a bishop; for at that time many bishops also had secular principalities in which they could indeed command. But a bishop, as bishop) "has no power to impose any statute or ceremony on his church without the consent of the churches in clear words or by tacit

consent. Because the church is free and a ruler (woman), and the bishops do not rule over the faith of the churches, nor may they burden and harass them against their will. For they are only servants and stewards, but not lords of the churches. But if the church, as one body with the bishops, agrees, they can impose on each other whatever they want, as long as godliness does not suffer; they can also impose such burdens again at will. But the bishops do not seek such power; they want to rule and have everything freely. We must not concede this, nor in any way participate in this injustice or oppression of the churches and the truth. Even if they wanted to use force and compel us, we must not obey or consent, but rather die: to maintain the difference between these two governments, that is, for the will and law of God, against godlessness and church robbery." (Reply to Melanchthon in Augsburg to the questions sent to him about the human statutes, from the year 1530. XVI, 1207—9 [AE 49:384-87ff.])

Walch: "From what has already been said, it is easy to judge what the nature of the government in the apostolic church was like. It was nothing other than the power to establish in external matters what was necessary for the maintenance of good order and for the easier attainment of the purpose of the church: this power was such that it was common to teachers and listeners alike and removed from all dominion. We read in the books of the New Testament that not only the apostles and church ministers, although they had authority over the others, but also the listeners possessed this power, and we see from this that when something had to be considered and decided, the people also cast their votes." (*Hist. eccles.*, p. 431.)

Luther refutes the objections raised against this in his 1523 treatise “On Secular Authority.” He writes:

"But if you say: Since there should be no secular sword among Christians, how can they be governed externally? There must always be authority among Christians. Answer: There should and can be no authority among Christians, but each one is at the same time subject to the other, as Paul says in Romans 12:10, 16: ‘Each one should regard the other as superior.’ And Peter in 1 Peter 1:5: ‘Be subject to one another.’ This is also what Christ wants in Luke 14:8: “When you are invited to a wedding, sit at the lowest place.” There is no superior among Christians, for there is only Christ himself and alone. And what authority can there be, since they are all equal and have the same rights, power, goods, and honor, and none desires to be superior to the other, but each wants to be

subordinate to the other? Could one establish no authority where such people are, even if one wanted to, because their nature and disposition do not allow them to have superiors, since no one wants to be superior nor can be? But where such people are not, there are also no true Christians. — What then are the priests and bishops? Answer: Their rule is not an authority or power, but a service and office; for they are not higher or better than other Christians. Therefore, they should not impose any law or commandment on others without their consent and permission, but their rule is nothing other than to drive God's word, so that they may lead Christians and overcome heresy. For, as has been said, Christians cannot be ruled except by God's word alone. For Christians must be ruled in faith, not by outward works. But faith cannot come through any human word, but only through God's Word; as St. Paul says in Romans 10:17: “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” Those who do not believe are not Christians and do not belong to Christ's kingdom, but to the worldly kingdom, where they are forced and governed by the sword and external rule. Christians do all good things of their own free will and have enough for themselves in God's word alone." (X, 465 f. [AE 45:117-18 f.])

In the state churches, it is, of course, considered fanciful to claim that in a Christian community no one but Christ has the power to command, indeed, that it is impossible for one Christian to rule over another with justice, since Christians are rather subjects of one another. It is believed that such communities cannot be found on earth. And it is true: in state churches, order can only be maintained through coercion. But this does not prove that this teaching is false, only that there is a lack of true congregations in the state churches. Congregations that make proper use of Christian freedom must be educated to do so through the Gospel. Where this does not happen, and even less so where church discipline, even to the point of exclusion, is practiced, then of course no truly Christian congregations can arise which are governed solely by God's Word; they can only be governed and held together by police coercion.

A clear proof that bishops and presbyters were one and the same in apostolic times is also found in Acts 20:17, compared with verse 28. The apostle then summoned the presbyters or elders of Ephesus to Miletus and gave a long speech to them, in which he testified, among other things, that the Holy Spirit had appointed them as bishops to shepherd the church of God. The same people are thus called presbyters here and then bishops.

It is commonly believed that the Episcopalians are closest to us Lutherans

because they have pretty much the same doctrine of Baptism as the divine Word and, at least, do not speak out so decisively in favor of the Reformed doctrine of the Lord's Supper. The fact that they differ from us in their church constitution is considered incidental. But this is not so. What separates us from them, what once separated our first congregation in St. Louis from them, after the Episcopal Church had gladly allowed them to use its church for a time, concerns the great principle of Christianity, according to which we Lutherans grant Christians their full Christian freedom and do not grant any church minister power alongside the power of the Word as a power bestowed by God.

The Confessions speaks only in passing about the freedom of Christians from the decisions of a council in the preface to the Smalcald Articles, where Luther expresses the fear that a "free Christian council," in which everything would be discussed and decided according to God's Word, could probably never be hoped for, and therefore he concludes with the request: "Oh, dear Lord Jesus Christ, hold the council yourself and redeem your own through your glorious future. It is lost with the Pope and his followers; they do not want you." (SA Preface 15)

In his private writings, Luther writes about the power of councils—and we must also think of our [Missouri] Synod here—among other things: "Therefore, I will state my opinion here and answer the main question as follows: That a council has no power to establish new articles of faith, regardless of whether the Holy Spirit is present. For even the Apostle Council in Jerusalem, Acts 15:11, does not establish anything new in the faith, but, as St. Peter concludes, that all their ancestors also believed this article, that one must be saved without law, solely through the grace of Christ. ... Thirdly, a council has no power to command new good works, nor can it do so. For all good works are already commanded in the Holy Scriptures and are superfluous. ... Fifthly, a council has no power to impose new ceremonies on Christians in the case of mortal sin or danger of conscience, such as feast days, holidays, food, drink, and clothing. But where they do so, St. Augustine stands there *ad Januarium* and says: *Hoc genus liberas habet observationes* (the observance of this kind of thing is free), and Christ gave few ceremonies. For because they **do not** have the power to **command,** we also have the power **to leave it,** indeed, it is **forbidden to us** to observe it according to St**.** Paulus Col. 2:16: "Let no one judge you in regard to eating and drinking, or in regard to a festival or new moon or sabbaths... Ceremonies should be left out of the councils at home in the parishes, yes, even in the schools, so that the schoolmaster would be the truest *ceremoniarum* next to the parish priest. For the pupils learn it all from the others without any essays or

effort. So when and how the pupils sing or pray in church, the crowd learns it after them, and what they sing over the corpse or at the grave, the others also learn; when they kneel down and fold their hands, the schoolmaster taps with his stick while they sing: *Et homo factus est* (And became a man), the crowd follows suit; when they take off their hats or bend their knees whenever the name of Jesus Christ is mentioned, and whatever else they practice in terms of Christian discipline and behavior, the crowd also follows suit without being taught, moved by living examples. After all, all ceremonies, even under the Pope, come from schools and parishes, without the Pope seeking to impose his tyranny with food, fasting, celebrations, etc. But one must also be mindful here that the ceremonies do not ultimately become excessive. First and foremost, however, one must ensure that they are not regarded as necessary for salvation, but serve only for external discipline and order, which may be changed at any time and are not commanded in the churches as eternal laws (as the Pope does) and written into the books with tyrannical threats. For it is a completely external, physical, transitory, changeable thing." (On the Councils and Churches. 1539. XVI, 2753. 2761. 2770; [StL 16, 2250, 2256, 2263; AE 41:123,130,136 f.])

Let us remember this well. We often see with regret how many beautiful ceremonies are increasingly falling into disuse among us, e.g., bowing our heads or kneeling at the name of Jesus. And yet this is such a wonderful confession of our faith that Christ is the true God born of the Father in eternity. The beautiful ancient Christian custom of making the sign of the cross has now, unfortunately, become so much a mark of Catholics in the eyes of the whole world that we cannot reintroduce it into public use without causing great offense. But all the more reason why we should not tacitly allow good old ceremonies that are still in vogue to gradually disappear, placing us outwardly on the same level as the sects. However—and this is what we learn here—this endeavor must never lead us to insist on such ceremonies “under pain of mortal sin,” i.e., under the threat that anyone who does not participate is sinning against his conscience.

Of course, it is argued that in order to maintain the unity of the church, there must be a court of law with the power to make final decisions in matters of dispute. Luther says quite correctly:

"Perhaps they will also show off before the simple-minded rabble and other uncomprehending people, as they are not yet recognized by the churches as wolves and false teachers, but are considered to be true Christians. Yes, indeed, that is wise and well said. If the sheep did not flee from the wolves before the wolves, through their Christian

council and public judgment, told the sheep to flee, the sheepfold would soon be empty and the shepherd would find neither milk, cheese, butter, wool, meat, nor a hoof in a single day; that would be called shepherding the sheep! What did Christ, our Lord, do when he told us and commanded us to guard ourselves against the wolves without waiting for the wolves' council? Not only does the whole flock of sheep have the right and power to flee from the wolves, but also each sheep for itself, wherever it is able to do so; as it does, c: “My sheep flee from strangers.” (Example of ordaining a true Christian bishop. 1542. XVII, 140 f. [StL 17, 102 f.])

It is further objected: Luther himself recommended the establishment of consistories and visitators to his elector! A glance at history will suffice to answer this objection. In 1523, Luther had drafted and published a church order, but as a private document. However, it was recognized that the congregations needed to be visited and advised as necessary, without anyone being compelled to accept the advice of these visitators. The elector himself took matters into his own hands and assigned a number of theologians to carry out such visitations, and Luther drew up instructions for them in which all papal coercion of conscience was emphatically rejected. His words are as follows: "Although we cannot issue this (the order of visitation) as a strict commandment, lest we raise new papal decrees, but rather as a history or story, and as a testimony and confession of our faith, we nevertheless hope that all pious, peaceful pastors who take the Gospel seriously and desire to hold unanimously and equally with us, as St. Paul teaches in Phil. 2:2, that we should do, will not despise the diligence of our sovereign and most gracious lord, nor our love and good will, with ingratitude or pride, but willingly, without compulsion, in a loving manner, submit to such visitation and live peacefully with us, until God the Holy Spirit brings about something better through them or through us. But if some should wilfully oppose this and, without good reason, want to make something special, as one finds wild heads who, out of sheer malice, cannot bear anything common or equal, but whose hearts and lives are unequal and stubborn, we must let them go from us, like the chaff from the threshing floor, but not abandon our equality for their sake." (Instruction of the Visitors. 1538. X, 1909 f. [StL 10, 1634 AE 40:272 f.; emphases Walther’s])

Even though the Elector was at the head, no coercion should be used in the implementation, but only an appeal to love, for the Elector was not acting here as a prince of the

secular authority, but as a Christian. For the sake of love, for the sake of outward unity and to show solidarity in faith, and finally for the sake of great blessing, everyone will now certainly welcome such an order with joy, as we have it in our synod, for example. Let us just think what would have become of the American Lutheran Church without the synodical connection! Seminaries, missions, and all such godly and necessary institutions and works can only in rare cases and under special circumstances be operated appropriately by a single congregation; otherwise, they require the cooperation of an entire association of congregations. Nevertheless, it remains clear that we cannot therefore compel anyone to join the Synod. If anyone refrains from doing so for dishonest reasons, out of stubbornness, out of pride, because he does not want to be supervised, out of indifference to the kingdom of God and the salvation of souls, or out of concern that he will be exposed in a community with supervisory rights, and the like, that is his business. We must leave the judgment of this to the One who alone can examine hearts and minds and who on that day “will bring to light what was hidden in darkness.”

Incidentally, it is a mistake to think that the consistories already had the judicial and legislative power in Luther's time, or even at his behest, which they later received and retained. Löscher gives a chronicle-like history of the Saxon church order in his “Unschuldige Nachrichten” (Innocent News). Under the year 1539, it states: “At that time, the first Saxon consistory was also established in Wittenberg, although it had no jurisdiction.” Under the year 1543, it continues: “A consistory was established in Leipzig, but without jurisdiction, in which, as in Wittenberg, anyone could obtain information.” It is not until 1555, long after Luther's death, that it states: “Elector Augustus established three consistories, in Leipzig, Wittenberg, and Meissen, along with some jurisdiction.” Finally, under 1580, it states: “The consistory in Meissen has been moved to Dresden and made the Oberconsistorio.” (Year 1703, pp. 24, 25, 26.)

It is therefore ignorance or malice when the state churches invoke Luther's precedent in defense of the rule of conscience that the consistories now exercise. Luther would “tear apart” the consistories of our day, as he said shortly before his death, when papal law was occasionally used as the basis for judgments: “We must tear apart the consistory, for we do not want the lawyers and the pope in it.” (W[1] XXII, 2210; StL 22, 1511)

41 [1883 Western District Convention essay by Walther]

## Thesis IV.

**Nor any individual congregation, much less a majority of its members. 2 Tim. 4:3. Ex. 23:2.**

We know what great privileges the whole church, as the holder of the keys, and therefore also every individual or local congregation, has according to God's Word. Within its circle, it is the highest and final court, from which no appeal can be made to any other within it. It is therefore also the church that calls the preacher, examines his teaching, removes him under certain circumstances, admits members, disciplines them, excludes them if necessary, etc. Many, when they hear this teaching of ours, which is clearly founded in God's Word and clearly attested to in the confession of our church, but which, unfortunately, has become increasingly rare, think, especially in Germany, that our pastors are in fact quite pitiful and miserable servants of men; that the Missouri Synod has a pope turned upside down, a pope with as many heads as there are members of the congregation; that it has applied the political-democratic institutions of the American republic to the church. But this is a great mistake. For the time being, the form of the congregations found among us is, as I have said, no other than that prescribed in God's Word itself. Furthermore, we know very well that the great rights of the congregation also have their limits in God's Word. The congregation may well command its preacher to proclaim and apply God's Word purely and sincerely according to the confessions of the church; but it can by no means prescribe the opposite, namely, to preach something that is not revealed in God's Word, or to conceal something that belongs to God's counsel for salvation. A congregation may demand of its preacher that he perform his office faithfully; but it cannot command him to do the opposite, namely, to do what God's Word forbids him to do, or forbid him to do what God requires of him as a servant of Christ. For example, it cannot force a preacher to accept an obvious sinner or heretic into the congregation or to administer Holy Communion to him, because he is well paid or enjoys great prestige. Nor may it forbid the preacher to visit the members in their homes and to admonish and punish them privately, because “that would mean interfering in family affairs.” — A preacher must not give in here either. He should prove to the congregation that he is not only a servant of the congregation, but also a servant of Christ, and that his profession has by no means made him a submissive creature of his congregation. It is actually God who appoints preachers to their office. They are not so much appointed by men,

as rather appointed through men by God. Therefore, Paul Gal. 1:1 expressly boasts that he was “not called by men”; indeed, as an apostle directly called by Jesus Christ, he could add that he was “not called through men,” whereas now God no longer calls directly, but indirectly, namely through the congregation. If the congregation therefore does not want to obey the preacher, indeed, even drive him away, when he adheres most closely to Christ's words in his teaching and ministry, it is not merely a poor sinful man that it is disobeying, but Christ himself, the Lord of lords, and it is driving him away from itself. That is why Christ has already given his servants instructions for such a case: they should then shake the dust from their feet, that is, prove by their actions that they want nothing to do with such a congregation, that God's curse is upon it. But the blessing which they have offered in vain to the ungrateful congregation shall not be lost, as the Lord has promised, but shall return to them, the expelled preachers. Matthew 10:12-15.

Secondly, one congregation [*Gemeinde*] must not rule over another congregation. The smallest congregation stands on an equal footing with the largest, the branch congregation with its mother church. We can see where the opposite doctrine can ultimately lead in the Roman Church, which calls itself “mother and teacher of all churches” in the decrees of the Council of Trent. It is therefore also completely contrary to pure doctrine that when members of one congregation move to another, they want everything in the latter to be arranged in the same way as it was in their former, perhaps larger, congregation, even in matters of free indifferent things (adiaphora).

Thirdly, however, no individual congregation may rule over the faith and conscience of its own members by, for example, imposing its human regulations on their conscience as necessary in themselves. Of course, every congregation must make regulations; that is clear, for who else can do so but the congregation itself, where God has not prescribed the order in which something is to be done? And every individual member of the congregation must rightly submit to such rules for the sake of peace and love, provided that they are in no way contrary to the word of God. But as soon as these merely ecclesiastical rules are placed on the same level as God's commandments, and indeed, transgressions against the external order are rebuked more severely than sins against God's law, this is tyranny of conscience. Of course, a church must sometimes pass judgment in matters of doctrine and other matters of conscience; but if it demands that each of its members submit to its judgment without having proven its correctness from God's Word, or even without being able to prove it, then this is nothing other than a shameful tyranny of conscience.

A key proof text for this is 2 Timothy 4:3, where the apostle prophesies: “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, they will heap up for themselves teachers, having itching ears.” The apostle thus indicates as an obvious sign of the apostasy of a congregation that it does not want to be bound by God's Word and therefore demands that its preacher preach to them “after their own desires,” and therefore also wants to force some of its members to agree with its arbitrary decisions in matters of doctrine and other matters of conscience.

According to this, even the largest majority in the congregation cannot bind the conscience of the minority. It is, of course, customary throughout the world that, as a rule, the majority of a body is decisive for a decision. But even apart from the fact that in matters of faith and conscience, a congregational decision always requires the unanimity of the members, even in indifferent matters, that is, in matters that God's Word has not decided but left open, the majority may not demand obedience outright, but only for the sake of love, peace, and good order. If it does the opposite, this also falls under the concept of domination of conscience.

Exodus 23:2 belongs here: “You shall not follow the multitude to do evil.” There is, of course, a great temptation to follow the large crowd, that is, the majority, even to do evil. But a decision by the majority, indeed by the whole world, against God's Word is null and void. The right of protest applies here, which the few Lutheran imperial estates once exercised in Speyer in 1529 against the majority of Catholic princes, and from which protest, as is well known, the entire Lutheran Church once received the name “Protestant Church.”

Our confession states that no congregation may assume dominion over another, as stated in the Formula of Concord: "We also believe, teach, and confess that no church should condemn another because it has more or less external ceremonies not commanded by God than the other; if otherwise there is unity in doctrine and in all the same articles, as well as in the right use of the holy sacraments, according to the well-known saying: ‘*Dissonantia jejunii non dissolvit consonantiam fidei*’, inequality in fasting should not divide unity in faith." (FC Ep X 7)

Luther, however, testifies: "We know that in Christianity it is done that all churches are equal, and that there is no more than one united church of Christ in the world, as we pray: 'I believe in one holy Christian church. The reason is this: for wherever there is a church in the whole world, it has no other gospel or Holy Scripture, no other Baptism and Sacrament, no other faith and spirit,

no other Christ and God, no other Lord's Prayer and prayer, no other hope and eternal life than we have here in our churches in Wittenberg, and their bishops are equal to our bishops or pastors and preachers, none of them lord or servant of the other, they have the same mind and heart, and everything that belongs to the church is the same." (Against the Papacy in Rome, founded by the Devil. XVII, 1398 [StL 17, 1115; AE 41:358]]

Hülsemann finally writes on this subject: "Dependence on the jurisdiction of another (church) and the obligation to preserve unity in faith and doctrine with all other particular churches of Christ are different from each other. This (obligation) is divine law, 1 Cor. 12:24 ff.; that (dependence) is human law in the relationship of one congregation to another." (*Praelect. ad Breviar. c*. 17. 8 2. p. 1217.)

Every congregation is therefore bound according to God's Word to be one with other orthodox congregations in the doctrine revealed in God's Word; if it does not seek this unity, it is a false church. However, external connection with other congregations, for example through a synod, neither gives nor takes anything away from the congregation; it can be a true church even without it. Whether it acts in accordance with love when it persistently refuses to join an orthodox synod is, of course, another question.

Regarding the fact that a congregation has no right to rule over the conscience of its preacher,

Luther writes to a city council (probably in Arnstadt), which wanted to remove a righteous preacher *) [*) Probably Joachim Mörlin.] because of his punishment, Luther writes with great earnestness, among other things, as follows: "You are not masters over the pastors and the preaching office; you did not establish them, but God's Son alone; you have added nothing to them, and have much less right to them, neither the devil in the kingdom of heaven shall master them nor teach them, nor prevent them from punishing. For it is God's punishment, not man's, who wills it unopposed, but commanded it; wait for your office and let God be satisfied with his reign before he teaches you to do it. None of you can bear it when a stranger dismisses or drives away your servant, whom you cannot do without. Yes, there is no shepherd boy so lowly that he would suffer a harsh word from a stranger; but God's servant must be everyone's fool and suffer everything from everyone, while no one can or will suffer anything from him, not even God's own Word." (1543. X, 1900 [StL 10, 1627])

Of the rule of a congregation over its members

Joh. Gerhard writes: “The true church does not command people to do or refrain from doing certain things for the sake of its commandments, but only

for the sake of order and propriety, so that order may be maintained and offense avoided; therefore, as long as this is not violated, it leaves consciences free and neither imposes scruples on them nor imposes necessities on them." (*Confess. cathol. f*. 627.)

Therefore, one can certainly do no better service to a congregation that wants to force its members to observe its rules than to resolutely refuse to obey it.

If a congregation finds anything in its rules that contradicts the Word of God, it must not hesitate for a moment to revoke it.

Luther says about this: "The holy church sins and stumbles or errs, as the Lord's Prayer teaches; but it does not defend or excuse itself, but humbly asks for forgiveness and improves itself as best it can: thus it is forgiven, so that its sin is no longer counted as sin. If I am not to recognize or distinguish the true church from the false one by its obedience and stubborn disobedience, then I know nothing more to say about any church." (Letter concerning his book on the Winkelmesse. 1534. XIX, 1579 [StL 19, 1294])

We find a passage in the Wittenberg reports stating that even the majority must not rule over the minority.

Melanchthon writes in a statement requested of him in 1556 by Maximilian II, later Emperor: "So it can often happen that the crowd of false teachers is much larger than the small group of true teachers; yet the small group of true teachers and their churches remain the true church of God and remain pure in understanding without sophistry. From all this it follows that one should judge not according to the majority, nor according to the authority of persons, pope or bishop, but according to God's Word. In worldly courts, it is thus that the high authorities and the majority have the power to make a declaration in doubtful matters, and the declaration is valid ex officio; but in matters of faith, it is not so. For the authority of the person and the majority does not have the power to establish a new or different god, as Nebuchadnezzar wanted to do. God's Word must be the judge; this is certain in itself and not uncertain, as the worldly wise pretend. But if it is said that if the higher authority and the sovereignty of the person do not apply, then everything becomes uncertain and there is no end to divisions, the answer is this: although this objection applies in worldly matters, it cannot apply in matters of faith. For it is public knowledge that no creature has the power to make a new or different God. And if one argues against this, saying that everyone can easily grasp their own particular understanding, this can be countered by saying that God-fearing and

intelligent people recognize what sophistry is." (*Consil. theol. Witebergensia*. Frankfurt a. M. 1664. *fol. 75. sq*.)

Even in our current doctrinal dispute, many think: “Who knows who is right? Holy Scripture is not so clear that every layman could decide. Where the majority turn, there must be the truth.” — But the majority truly do not do so here. Every Christian must base his faith solely on Holy Scripture. When Arianism had once taken over almost all of Christendom, Emperor Constantius, who sided with the Arians, asked Bishop Liberius, who professed his allegiance to Athanasius: “What part of the world are you, that you alone side with the godless man Athanasius and disturb the peace of the whole world?” Liberius replied: “That I stand alone does not detract from the word of faith, for once there were only three who defied the royal command” (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, Dan. 3:1-30).

From everything that has been said about this thesis, it is indisputable that only through the teaching of the Lutheran Church is all glory given to God alone. Neither preachers nor listeners may presume to exercise power that belongs to God. Preachers may not rule over the faith and conscience of their listeners, nor may the latter attempt to make servants of God their slaves or bind each other's consciences to commandments that God has not given. May God's grace preserve us in this as well!

## Thesis V.

After the second and third theses have shown that the Lutheran Church does not give the whole Church or any representative of it the right and power to rule over the faith and conscience of Christians, the fourth thesis, which also denies this power to the individual congregation, is followed in the fifth thesis by the proof that the Lutheran Church does not give such power to any representative of the individual congregation either. It states:

**Nor does any governing body of an individual congregation, whether it be called a council, elders, church council, presbytery, or the like.**

**1 Tim. 5:17, 4:14, 1 Cor. 12:28, Acts 21:18–22 (cf. Thesis III).**

In 1 Tim. 5:17, we read the following: “The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.”

From this passage, it is clear that in the early Christian church there were also presbyters or elders who did not labor in the word and doctrine, i.e., who did not hold the office of preaching. The older church teachers call them lay elders (πρεσβότεροι του λαού, *seniores plebis*). We call them leaders. Grabau did not want to know about two kinds of presbyters or elders and therefore interpreted the words of the apostle as follows: The elders who preside, that is, the pastors, should be held in double honor, especially those who labor in word and doctrine with effort and diligence. It is obvious that this cannot be the opinion of the apostle. For do those who "preside" over the preaching ministry, but who apply neither diligence nor effort to it, "preside well"? Are such people also worthy of double honor? Far be it from that! Rather, the apostle distinguishes between the so-called lay elders and the teaching elders.

We do not find any account of the establishment of the lay presbyterate in the New Testament. And this silence is certain proof that it is not an office in the church specially instituted by God. But just as the office of deacon or alms-giver arose as a branch of the preaching office, so too was the lay elder office soon established and assigned certain duties whose performance was incumbent upon the preachers, but which, in addition to their preaching duties, was no longer possible for them to perform given the rapid growth of the congregations. For we read in

Acts 6:1-4: "In those days, when the number of disciples was increasing, the Greek-speaking believers complained against the Hebrew-speaking believers that their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. Then the Twelve called the multitude of disciples together and said, 'It is not right that we should neglect the word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brothers, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.'"

From this we see that even the beloved apostles in the church at Jerusalem initially administered the office of caring for the poor or the office of almsgiving, which was connected with the office of preaching, but that when, due to the growth of the church, they could no longer administer the office of almsgiving without neglecting their main office, they asked the church to relieve them of the office of almsgiving and to entrust it to special persons, so that they might be all the more unhindered in performing the office of the Word. With the emergence of the office of lay elder or church leader, which had to do with matters of church government, order, and discipline, the situation may well have been very similar.

When 1 Cor. 12:28 distinguishes between apostles, teachers (i.e., pastors),

helpers (i.e., deacons or caretakers of the poor), and rulers (*χυβερνητάϊ*), the latter seem to have been those who are called “elders” in 1 Timothy 5:17, who did not work on the word and teaching.

The third place where they are mentioned in Scripture is 1 Tim. 4:14, where Paul admonishes his Timothy: “Do not neglect the gift that is given to you through prophecy with the laying on of hands by the elders,” according to the Greek: “by the presbytery,” that is, the assembly of leaders.

Let us hear what our faithful Lutheran teachers have to say about this.

Chemnitz says: "Because many duties belong to the office of the church, which, when the number of believers is very large, cannot all be performed by one or a few, it was decided, so that everything might be done in an orderly and edifying manner, when the congregation had grown large, to divide the duties of the ministry into certain ranks of church servants, which are called τάξεις or τάξεις. properly and edifyingly, when the congregation of the church had multiplied, to divide those duties of the ministry into certain ranks of church servants, which were subsequently called *τάξεις* or *τάγματα*, so that each one would have his own specific position in which he would serve the congregation through certain duties of the ministry (of the church office). In 1 Timothy 5:17, Paul mentions two types of presbyters, some of whom worked in the word and in teaching, while others were in charge of church discipline, which Tertullian also mentions. ... But it should be added that: 1) it is not a commandment of God what or how many such ranks or orders there should be; 2) in the time of the apostles, not all congregations had the same and the same number of ranks or orders. ... But those ranks of which we have spoken so far were nothing above and beyond the office of the Word and the sacraments; rather, the true duties of the ministry (the church office) itself were divided into those ranks." (*Examen Concil. Trid. Ed. Genev f. 574. sq*.)

Joh. Gerhard: "In the apostolic and original church, there were two types of presbyters, which are called seniors in Latin, as can be concluded from 1 Tim. 5:17. For some administered the teaching office, or, as the apostle says there, worked in the word and in teaching, who were called bishops, pastors, etc.; others, however, were only appointed for moral censorship and the maintenance of church discipline, since the still pagan authorities did not support the teachers in the church in this matter."

This last sentence reflects the view of the state church of later theologians on church government. The reason why church leaders were needed in addition to preachers was probably not because

the authorities did not yet take care of matters of church discipline, but because the congregations were becoming more populous.

Gerhard continues: "These (who were appointed to church discipline) were called rulers and leaders, as can be concluded from 1 Cor. 12:28 and Rom. 12:8. Ambrosius writes at the beginning of 1 Tim. 5: “The synagogue (the Jewish church) and later the (Christian) church also had senior members, without whose advice nothing was done in the church, and I do not know through what negligence this has been lost, whether through the sloth or rather the pride of the teachers, in that they alone want to be considered important.” Both types were collectively called overseers, 1 Tim. 5:17, and superiors, Acts 15:22, Heb. 13:7, 17:24. Both together formed that holy college which Paul calls the presbytery, 1 Tim. 4:14: “Do not neglect the gift that is given to you through prophecy with the laying on of hands by the elders” (of the presbytery). (*Loc. de ministerio* § 232.)

We thank God that we have this institution of the apostolic church, or at least one similar to it, in our congregations again. We say: at least an institution similar to the apostolic one, because our leaders are not entrusted with as many official duties as those elders seem to have had. The latter had to devote all their time to their office and were therefore supported by the congregations, while our leaders, as is well known, have a narrower sphere of office in our significantly smaller congregations and retain their earthly professions alongside it.

Now the question is: How can such a presbytery also exercise tyranny of conscience? We see this most clearly among the Presbyterians. Among them, the presbytery rules the congregation so completely that everything they decree is law for the congregation. They elect the preacher, appoint him, dismiss him; they admit members to the congregation and exclude them; they make rules, change, increase, and diminish ceremonies, etc. It is true that they separated from the Episcopalians because of their episcopal constitution; but in their case the presbytery is no better than the bishop in the case of the latter. The Presbyterians cite 1 Peter 2:13 to justify their human rule: “Be subject to every human institution for the Lord's sake.” But this does not refer to church institutions at all, but to secular authorities. Moreover, the Greek word which Luther translated as “order” actually means creature or something that God orders. But it is called “human order” because it has been ordained by God among men. Therefore, we say not only of the authorities, but also of marriage, that it is “God's creature and order.”

The story in Acts 21:18–22 teaches us that the presbytery or church senate (or whatever the

representative body of the individual congregation may be called) has no power to rule over the congregation. Paul comes to Jerusalem to James and the elders to discuss matters with them. But since a rumor had spread in the congregation in Jerusalem that Paul was teaching all Jews among the Gentiles to completely renounce Moses, the apostles and elders did not consider it sufficient that Paul had justified himself before them, but they considered it necessary that this also be done before the whole congregation. James therefore says, "What then? However, the crowd must come together, for it will be brought before them that you have come." It was therefore apostolic practice that not the presbytery stood above the congregation, but the congregation above the presbytery. Hence our church also confesses in the first appendix to the Schmalkaldic Articles: "Christ gives the highest and final judgment of the churches, since he says (Matthew 18:17), 'Tell it to the churches.

## Thesis VI.

But can't the preacher, who is a servant of Christ, rule over Christians in God's stead? The sixth thesis answers this question:

**No preacher can —**

and gives four reasons for this.

### A. He is not a lord, but a servant of the congregation.

This thesis certainly contains much that is humiliating for preachers. But that is precisely why this teaching is so important, because it humbles us; for anyone who is proud and ambitious is not fit to be a preacher. Honor is one of the three idols that the world worships. A preacher who has not yet been converted from worldly service will, even if he is not exactly a false teacher, generally destroy more than he builds. Nor should he think that because he is more educated and knowledgeable than the majority of the congregation, it is shameful for him to be called a servant of the church or congregation. For what is the church? It is the assembly of believers and saints, to whom God himself has appointed angels as servants! (Heb. 1:14.) Whenever one speaks of the congregation, one actually means only the true Christians who are found in the mixed crowd of the visible congregation (Rom. 2:28, 29). The preacher is not actually the servant of the hypocrites.

Admittedly, even the righteous preacher still has the flesh in him, which finds serving bitter, while would much rather be praised and preferred and rule.

But he will immediately fight down such carnal desires when they stir in him. In the example of the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ, he has a powerful motive for doing so. He, the King of kings, did not come to rule, but to serve. After forbidding his disciples to rule and exercise power, he adds: “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Mark 10:45. What are we compared to Him! We should therefore not consider it a disgrace, but rather the highest honor, the most glorious office, to be allowed to be true servants of Christ. And even if some want to despise preachers for this reason, a faithful preacher will always have among his congregation those who love him all the more for his service. (1 Thess. 5:12) This is part of the cross that God sends to preachers for their salvation.

The first of the relevant passages is 1 Cor. 3:5. The apostle had rebuked the Corinthians for clinging to men in carnal zeal, some to Peter, some to Paul, and others to Apollos. Then Paul exclaims: “Who is Paul? Who is Apollos? They are servants through whom you have become believers, as the Lord has given to each one.” When Paul speaks of himself and his fellow apostles in this way, what folly it is for us to be indignant about this name! It is true that the office of a preacher is the highest and most exalted of all offices on earth; but nevertheless, it is just an office, that is, as the Greek text of the New Testament says, only a *diakonia*, a service.

In 2 Corinthians 1:24, Paul says: “Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work together for your joy.”

If we, the apostle wants to say, made ourselves lords over your faith, we would become helpers of your servile fear. And that should not be a preacher, but a helper of the joy that flows from the Gospel. The apostle does not mean to deny that a preacher can demand faith for what he presents to his listeners from the Holy Scriptures; rather, what he rejects is that a preacher demands that something be believed and held to be right or wrong because he says, commands, or forbids it.

In 1 Peter 5:3, the apostle adds these words to his exhortation, “Shepherd the flock of Christ”: “Not as lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.” With this contrast, the apostle means to say: By imperiously demanding obedience (to your human laws) in order to lead the flock to Christ and keep them with him, you will scatter the flock rather than feed it. Rather, go forth

as true lights in the Lord; then your office will surely be accompanied by rich blessings.

This was also the practice of the apostolic church. Paul through the church at Colossae exhorts the bishop Archippus to be faithful in his office. (Col. 4:17) John rebukes Bishop Diotrephes for wanting to “be held in high esteem,” for striving for dominion, for primacy in the church *(φιλοπρωτεόων)*, and therefore, among other things, for arbitrarily imposing excommunication. (3 John 9:10)

This is also what our church teaches. Through the Lutheran Reformation, we were not saved from the papacy in order to establish another form of rule, namely a new Lutheran priestly rule, but in order to enjoy freedom from all human rule over our conscience.

Thus, the Smalcald Articles state: "In 1 Corinthians 3:6, Paul makes all church ministers equal and teaches that the Church is above the ministers (*ecclesiam esse supra ministros*).... For he says, ‘All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas,’ that is, neither Peter nor any other minister of the Word may attribute to them any power or authority over the Church." (Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope. Tr 11)

Luther: "Therefore, the bishop's consecration is nothing other than when he takes one from the crowd, who all have equal power, and commands him to exercise the same power for the others; just as when ten brothers, the king's children, equal heirs, choose one to rule the inheritance for them; they would all be kings and have equal power, and yet one would be commanded to rule." (To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation. 1530. X, 303 [StL 10, 271; AE 44:128])

Here we have, in a nutshell, Luther's teaching on the ministry. According to Luther's teaching, which is well founded in God's Word, as soon as a person becomes a believing Christian, he also becomes a spiritual priest who is to bring the light that has dawned on him to others. (1 Pet. 2:9.) At the same time, however, God has established the order that not every Christian, but only certain persons duly called and appointed by the church, should administer the ministry of the Word and the holy sacraments in public. Far from such persons becoming a special kind of priest through their calling and appointment, with rights and powers greater than those of the community of believers who called them, the difference lies rather in the fact that, among the spiritual priests to whom all believers belong, they have the office that is, among the spiritual priests, they are the serving ones. In the Old Testament, there was a special priestly tribe alongside the other tribes, and only those who belonged to that

special priestly tribe had the power to offer sacrifices and perform other priestly duties. Even if a king wanted to offer sacrifices, these were not valid unless he belonged to the special priestly tribe. However, this difference has now ceased to exist in the New Testament Church, because the special priestly tribe of the Old Testament was a model for the entire Christian Church, which is why Peter calls out to them: “You are a royal priesthood.” (1 Pet. 2:9) However, just as in the Old Testament not every priest offered sacrifices, burned incense, and performed similar duties every day, but there was a specific order according to which first one and then another administered the office (as, for example, according to Luke 1:8-9, the priest Zacharias, John the Baptist's father), so now in the New Testament, not all spiritual priests, that is, not all believing Christians, but only those who are called and appointed to do so according to God's order, namely pastors, ministers (*Pfarrer*), preachers, etc., should publicly administer the priestly office, which all believing Christians have. In short, Christians who are not called to public office are indeed priests, but therefore not pastors, etc.; conversely, Christians who are duly called to this office are indeed pastors, etc., but not new priests, but, as already stated, only among the priests who serve in public office.

As proof that this is indeed Luther's teaching, we will highlight only the following from the almost countless similar testimonies found in Luther's writings.

Luther: “None of us is born an apostle, preacher, teacher, or pastor in Baptism, but we are all born mere priests and clerics; thereafter, such born clerics are called or chosen to such offices, which are to be performed on behalf of us all” (that is, in our place). (Writing Against the Private Mass 1533. XIX, 1536 [StL 19, 1260; AE 38:188])

The same: "What if they were forced to admit that all of us who are baptized are likewise priests? As we truly are, and command them to preach alone, but with our consent, then they would also know at the same time that they have no right or power to command us, except as much as we ourselves allow them of our own free will. It is written in 1 Peter 2:9: “You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood,” etc. Therefore, we are priests insofar as we are Christians. But those whom we call priests are servants chosen by us, who are to do everything in our name; and the priesthood is nothing other than a service." (The Babylonian Captivity of the Church, 1520. XIX, 134 f. [StL 19, 113])

That this teaching does not abolish true obedience to preachers, contrary to Hebrews 13:17, but only false obedience, is beautifully attested to in the following words

of Martin Chemnitz: "Does the ecclesiastical ministry deserve no reverence or authority at all? Yes, of course! But not in such a way that they have dominion **in** the church, whether pure or mixed, but that they have a ministry. Therefore, when they bring the teaching, the voice, and the word of God, we obey not men, but God Himself. But when they present something to our consciences **other than** the Word of God, **beyond** it or **contrary** to it, then baptism reminds us both of our obligation to obey the word of God and of our freedom from the commandments, doctrines, and statutes of men." (*Examen. Conc. Trid. Ed. Genev. f*. 239.)

Let us now listen to a classic passage from our Confessions, which clearly testifies that only the Church, and indeed the whole Church, i.e., all believing Christians, possess the keys directly or originally. The

Smalcald Articles say: "It must always be confessed that the keys do not belong to one man alone, but to the whole Church, and are given to it, as can be sufficiently proven with clear and certain arguments. For just as the promise of the Gospel belongs certainly and without mediation (*immediate*) to the whole Church, so the keys belong without mediation to the whole Church, since the keys are nothing other than the office through which such a promise is communicated to everyone who desires it, as is evident in the work that the Church has the power to ordain ministers. And Christ says in these words: “Whatever you bind, etc.,” and indicates to whom he has given the keys, namely to the Church: “Where two or three are gathered in my name, etc.” Item, Christ gives the highest and final judgment to the Church, when he says: “Tell the Church.” (First Appendix. On the Power and Authority of the Pope. Tr 24)

With regard to the remaining parts of the sixth thesis, the synod was forced by lack of time to limit its discussion to the most essential points.

**B. The preacher must have his doctrine examined and judged by the congregation.**

This is the second reason why no preacher has the right or power to rule over the faith and conscience of Christians.

If, as we have already heard, the preacher is not a lord but a servant of his congregation, then it follows that the congregation also has the right to examine and judge the doctrine and life of its pastor. But we also have explicit words from God on this subject.

55 [1883 Western District Convention essay by Walther]

1 Thess. 5:21 says, “Test everything; hold fast to what is good.” Just before this, Paul had written, “Do not despise prophecies” (that is, the gift of interpreting Scripture). With this, the apostle warned against despising the ministry. But in order to dispel the misunderstanding that the preacher has power over the faith of his listeners because of his office, the apostle immediately adds the exhortation that the listeners should test the prophecy or sermon of their preacher. Nowadays, the phrase “test everything” is often misunderstood or rather misused to mean that one must read all books, even those written against pure doctrine; it is therefore even the duty of a preacher to urge his listeners to acquire and study all counter-writings that have been published against his doctrine. But the apostle does not say, Read everything, but rather, “Examine everything!” Although we are therefore far from prohibiting anyone from reading the writings of our opponents, we do not say, “Read them, for you must examine everything!” But if one says, “The apostle says, ‘Examine everything!’ so one must read everything in order to be able to examine everything,” that is just as foolish as if one wanted to interpret the apostle's words, “Everything that is sold in the meat market, eat,” to mean that one must eat all meat sold in the market, whereas the apostle only means to say that one can eat with a clear conscience whatever can be bought in the meat market. Thus, the apostle means to say in 1 Thess. 5:21: Test everything you read or hear. However, the apostle does not say here what one should read and hear. But we know from other passages of Scripture that one should not read bad or suspicious books or listen to such preachers, unless one has a special calling to do so (Acts 19:19, Matthew 7:15).

In 1 Corinthians 10:15, even the enlightened apostle of the Lord exhorts the Corinthians: “Judge what I say!” And the Christians in Berea are not rebuked, but highly praised for “searching the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so” when Paul preached to them. (Acts 17:10-11.) What is also wonderful in the story of the Samaritan woman is that the inhabitants of the city of Sychar first believed because of the woman's words, because she had proven what she said with good reasons, but afterwards, when Christ himself preached to them, they “believed more because of his word.” (John 4:39-42.)

An example of preachers who sought to dominate the faith of their listeners by denying them the ability to examine it for themselves can be found in the Pharisees, who responded to the confession of their servants with the question: “Does any of the rulers or Pharisees believe in him? But this crowd that knows nothing of the law is accursed.” (John 7:48, 49)

Finally, all the passages in which God's Word warns us against

false prophets show that a Christian must examine the teachings of his preacher and that on the last day, if he stands on the left side, having been led astray by false teachings, he cannot excuse himself by saying that he was misled by his preacher. Christ will then answer him: Did you not have my word? Why did you not examine the teaching of your preacher? Did I not also call out to you: “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves” (Matthew 7:15)? Did not my faithful servants also admonish you: “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God” (1 John 4:1)? "I urge you to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the teaching you have learned. Avoid them. For such people do not serve the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the innocent“ (Rom. 16:17-18).

The present Romanizing Lutherans now admit that ”the church" has the power to examine doctrine, but they deny this right to individual Christians. However, the passages cited clearly apply to all Christians without exception, not only to teachers but also to their listeners; it is precisely the latter who are required to guard against blindly accepting what is presented to them, but rather to examine all doctrine.

Our church confesses this in the following passage from the

Treatise on the Power and Primary of the Pope: "*Quest*. 3. The canon says: ‘No one shall judge the highest seat; for neither the emperor nor the priests, neither the king nor the people, judge the judge.’ Thus, the pope acts like a tyrant on both sides: (1) he defends such errors with violence and fury, and (2) he will not tolerate any judges. And this latter action does more harm than all his fury; for as soon as the church is deprived of its right judgment and knowledge (judicial office), it is impossible to control false doctrine and unrighteous worship, and therefore many souls must be lost." ... Just as Christians are obliged to punish all other errors of the pope, so they are also obliged to punish the pope himself if he flees or resists the right judgment and true knowledge of the church." (On the Power and Primacy of the Pope. [Tr 50-51, 56])

Grabau once spoke in a manner very similar to that of the Antichrist. He wrote in his so-called “Pastoral Letter”: "Beware of this presumption and therefore leave the judgment of doctrine to those who are entitled to it according to Article 28 of the Augsburg Confession. Your teachers are not teachers of a false church, nor are they

teachers of a zeitgeist movement, but teachers of the true church, as is well known. You can therefore expect from them a righteous understanding of church doctrine, and indeed a deeper understanding than you can have, since they have learned to believe, to teach, and to keep you in the true faith, but you have learned to believe, to be kept in the true faith, and to be sanctified. Heb. 13:17-18: “Obey your teachers and follow them” (*Hirtenbrief*, etc., p. 18 ff.). This is quite appalling. All true faith ceases when one must presuppose pure doctrine in a preacher because he is a servant of the true church! Where would the Lutheran Church in America have ended up if this principle had gained general acceptance there? It would have perished. For according to Lutheran doctrine, it is rather by teaching pure doctrine that a preacher must first prove that he is a servant of the true church, and not by being a servant of the true church that he must prove that he teaches pure doctrine. Luther writes about how necessary it is for teachers to examine their listeners.

Luther writes: "Human words and teachings have decreed and ordained that only bishops, scholars, and councils should judge doctrine; whatever they decide, the whole world should consider right and articles of faith; as is sufficiently proven by their daily boasting about the pope's spiritual right. For one hears almost nothing from them but such praise that they have the power and right to judge what is Christian or heretical, and that the common Christian should wait for their judgment and abide by it. Behold, this praise, with which they have driven the whole world, and which is their highest refuge and defiance, how insolently and foolishly it storms against God's law and word! For Christ immediately sets up the opposite, taking away from the bishops, scholars, and councils both the right and the power to judge doctrine, and giving it to everyone and to all Christians in general, when he says in John 10:4: “My sheep know my voice.” Item, v. 5: “My sheep do not follow strangers, but flee from them, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” Item, v. 8: “Many are coming who are thieves and murderers, but the sheep do not listen to them.” Here you see clearly whose right it is to judge doctrine: bishops, the pope, scholars, and everyone has the power to teach, but the sheep shall judge whether they teach the voice of Christ or the voice of strangers. Dear friend, what may the water bubbles that are scratching around say in opposition: Concilia! Concilia!? Well, one must listen to the scholars, the bishops, the crowd; one must observe the old customs and habits!? Do you think that God's word should give way to your old customs, habits, bishops? Never! Therefore, let the bishops and councils conclude and decide what they want; but where we have God's word before us, it shall stand with us

and not with them, whether it be right or wrong, and they shall yield to us and obey our word." (Reason and cause from Scripture that a Christian assembly or congregation has the right and power to judge all teaching and to appoint and dismiss teachers. 1523. X, 1797-1800 [StL 10, 1540 ff.; AE 39:306f.])

Furthermore,

Luther writes: "So now the papists also say that they believe what the church believes; and as it is said of the Poles that they should say: I believe what my king believes. Why not? How could there be a better faith than this, which requires less effort and worry? So they say that a doctor once asked a charcoal burner on the bridge in Prague, out of pity for a poor layman: Dear man, what do you believe? The charcoal burner replied: What the church believes. The doctor: What does the church believe? The charcoal burner: What I believe. After that, when the doctor was about to die, he was so severely challenged in his faith by the devil that he could not stay anywhere or find peace until he said: I believe what the charcoal burner believes. It is also said of the great Thomas Aquinas that at the end of his life he could not stay with the devil until he said: I believe what is written in this book, and he held the Bible in his arms. But God grant us not much of such faith. For if they had believed nothing else but this, both the doctor and the charcoal burner believed themselves into the abyss of hell." (Warning letter to the people of Frankfurt, from the year 1533. XVII, 2442. f.)

Luther and our entire Lutheran Church therefore want nothing to do with mere *bona fide* belief or blind Köhler belief in the teachings of the Church that is not based on one's own knowledge and examination.

### C. The preacher must not command anything that Christ has not commanded.

Proof from God's Word: Matthew 20:25-28. (Compare above in Thesis III.) 2 Corinthians 8:8: “I do not say that I command anything.” How anxious the great apostle is here not to command anything that God has not already commanded! For although he had exhorted people to do a work that was undoubtedly pleasing to God, namely to support the poor Christians in Palestine, he nevertheless added these words, because God's Word exhorts us only to charity in general, but does not specify the place to which our gifts should be directed: “I am not saying that I command anything,” so that no one would think that an apostle, or he, Paul, claimed the power to command what the Lord had not already commanded.

2 Cor. 4:5: “We do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.” A

preacher should therefore preach not himself, but Christ alone. But when does that happen? When he, as Christ's ambassador (2 Cor. 5:20), not only delivers his message, but also commands in his sermons or otherwise in his administration of office what Christ has not commanded, thus behaving as if he were not a servant but a lord in the church. Preachers do have a certain power, but only insofar as they speak Christ's word. And in this sense Christ says in Luke 10:16: “He who hears you hears me, and he who despises you despises me.”

This and the two other passages to be compared here, Hebrews 13:17 and Matthew 23:2-3, which are not only shamefully twisted and misused by the Papists, but are also often misinterpreted by Romanizing Lutherans and used to whitewash their priestly rule, are interpreted by the

Apology as follows: "It is also certain that this word of the Lord Christ, Luke 10:16: ‘He who hears you hears me,’ does not speak of human statutes, but is directly against them; for the apostles did not receive a *mandatum cum libera*, that is, a completely free, unlimited command, namely, to preach not their own word, but God's word and the gospel. And the Lord Christ wants to strengthen the whole world with the words, ‘He who hears you hears me,’ just as it was necessary for us to be quite certain that the physical word of God was powerful and that no one should seek or wait for another word from heaven. Therefore, this word, “He who hears you hears me,” cannot be understood in terms of statutes. For Christ wants them to teach that through their mouths Christ himself is heard. So they must not preach their own word, but his word, his voice, and his gospel, that Christ may be heard... They also cite this saying to the Hebrews in 13:17: “Obey those who lead you,” etc. This passage demands that one should be obedient to the Gospel, for it does not give the bishops their own dominion or authority outside of the Gospel. ... We respond in the same way to the passage in Matthew 23:3: “The scribes sit on Moses' seat, etc. Now whatever they tell you to observe, observe and do.” It is certain that this does not command *universaliter*, in general, that we should observe everything they command, even against God's command and word; for in another place Scripture says: “One must obey God rather than men.” Therefore, if they teach unchristian and unbiblical things, one should not listen to them. Thus, this saying does not establish any rule outside of the Gospel; therefore, they cannot prove their authority, which they have established outside of the Gospel, through the Gospel; for the Gospel

does not speak of statutes, but of teaching God's Word." (Ap XXVIII 1-21)

Luther therefore testifies: "We have **one** Lord, who is Christ, who rules our souls. The bishops should do nothing but shepherd. Now St. Peter has overturned and condemned with one word all the rule that the pope now exercises, and clearly concludes (1 Pet. 5:3) that they have no power to command a word, but that they alone shall be servants, saying, This your Lord Christ says, **therefore** you shall do this." (IX, 821 [AE 30:137])

The same: "Therefore I say that neither the pope, nor the bishop, nor any man has the power to lay a single syllable upon a Christian, unless it be with his will, and whatever else happens is done out of a tyrannical spirit." (XIX, 83 [StL 19, 68; AE 36:70])

Grabau, on the other hand, says in his pastoral letter: "They (the Missourians) erroneously deny that the congregation owes obedience to its pastor in **all** things that are not contrary to God's Word; for it remains indebted to him according to Hebrews 13:17; but whether it can perform and carry out his will in every single case, e.g., a necessary school building, is another matter." (*Hirtenbrief*, etc., p. 55) According to Grabau, however, the congregation remains obligated to obey in all cases, for Hebrews 13:17 says, "Obey your teachers!" and since it does not say in which things one must obey, it follows that obedience to the preachers is commanded in all things!

Only the papists themselves have gone further. Grabau added, at least in words, "In all things that are not contrary to God's Word." But listen and be horrified by the antichristian blasphemy that we find in

Canonical Law, where it says, among other things, as follows: "If the Pope, oblivious to his own and his brothers' salvation, is found to be negligent, useless, and sluggish in his works, and moreover leads countless people unnoticed away from goodness (which, although more to his own detriment, but nevertheless harms everyone), as the first child of hell, who will suffer great torment with him for all eternity: in such a case, no one among mortals may presume to reproach him for his sins, because he who is to judge all may not be judged by anyone." (*C. Si papa, Dist.* 40.) To this is added the

Constitution of the Jesuits, in which, among other things, the following is to be read: "No constitutions, declarations, or any order can entail the obligation to commit a mortal sin or venial sin, **unless the superior commands it in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ or by virtue of obedience**."

(*Institutum. Tom. I. fol.* 415. Prague Edition.) In the register, this passage is indicated with the following words: “Superiors can make it obligatory to sin by virtue of obedience, if this brings many benefits.” (See register under the title: *Obedientia*.)

Similarly, the Jesuit Bellarmin says in one of his private writings: “The Catholic faith teaches that all virtue is good and all vice is evil; but if the Pope erred in commanding vice or forbidding virtue, the Church would be obliged to believe that vice is good and virtue is evil, if it did not want to sin against its conscience.” (*De Rom. Pontif.* I. 4. c. 5.)

It is clear that Luther had the highest reason to publicly burn the papal bull of excommunication together with papal canon law, in accordance with Isaiah 7:25, with the words: “Because you have grieved the Holy One of God, may eternal fire grieve and consume you!” (See Luther's Works by Walch[1] XXIV, 452) But as far as the constitution of the Jesuit Order is concerned, there is no question that if the devil himself wanted to found an order from hell, this evil spirit rising above God could not give his order a worse constitution than that of the Jesuits, these satellites of the Antichrist.

**D. A preacher has no power to determine or act arbitrarily on matters that concern the entire congregation.**

Every preacher has his specific circle of rights, which must be granted to him so that he can perform the office entrusted to him by God through the congregation. However, there is much else to be done in a congregation that does not belong exclusively to the rights of the preacher, but to the entire congregation, which is why this is usually referred to as collegial rights. These include, above all, the power of excommunication or exclusion from the congregation, according to Matthew 18:17 and 1 Corinthians 5:1-5, 13, as well as the power to admit and readmit those who have been excluded from the congregation (2 Corinthians 2:6-10) and that of ecclesiastical matters.

As regards excommunication or expulsion, the Apostle (1 Corinthians 5) rebukes not so much the bishop as the entire congregation of Corinth for not taking action against the adulterer; and even he, the apostle, does not himself impose excommunication on this obvious and unrepentant sinner, but, as he says, “in spirit present,” only gives his voice in favor of the same being excluded from the congregation “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, in your assembly.” Therefore, in verse 13, he also admonishes the congregation: “Put away from among yourselves the wicked person.” And

he writes similarly when he exhorts the congregation to take the same man back after he has repented, namely that the congregation, just as it had previously "punished" him, should now "forgive and comfort him all the more," that is, publicly absolve and accept him back, adding at the same time: "Whomsoever ye forgive, I forgive." A preacher therefore has neither the right to impose excommunication nor to release anyone from it without the congregation. If he does so, he exercises control over people's consciences, for considering a person to be excommunicated is a matter of conscience. (Only in one case must an exception be made here with regard to the lifting of excommunication. Namely, if an excommunicated person repents on his deathbed, and the congregation would have exempted him if it had been possible, then the preacher can and should absolve him even without a prior decision by the congregation, provided that he must subsequently give an account of this to his congregation.) This includes the fact that the Apostle John, as already mentioned above (under Thesis VI. A.), rebukes Bishop Diotrephes for arbitrarily expelling members of his congregation. (3 John 10)

This teaching is also found in our confession. For example, we read in the

Treatise: "It is certain that all pastors should have the common *judisdictio* (jurisdiction) to banish those who are guilty of public vices, and that the bishops have tyrannically drawn this power to themselves and shamefully abused it for their own enjoyment. For the officials have committed intolerable acts of malice with it and have tormented the people either out of greed or other malice and excommunicated them without any prior legal inquiry (*sine ullo ordine judiciorum*). ... Because such an accusation is very serious and grave, no one should be condemned in this case without legal and proper judgment (*sine ordine judiciali*). Because the bishops have usurped such jurisdiction as tyrants and shamefully abused it, there are otherwise good reasons not to obey them, it is right that this usurped jurisdiction should be taken away from them and given to the parish priests, to whom it belongs by Christ's command, and that it should be used properly (*legitimately*) for the betterment of people's lives and the increase of God's glory." (Second Appendix. On the Power and Jurisdiction of Bishops. [Tr 74-76, emphasis Walther's]) Here it is testified that the right of excommunication, which the papal bishops have usurped, must be taken away from them and restored to the parish priests; however, this does not in any way take away the power of excommunication from those bishops, but rather gives it to the parish priests. The contrast at issue here is not so much between bishops and preachers, but rather this: because the bishops, who are absent from the congregations, have not only been unable to use excommunication properly, but

have also shamefully abused it, either out of greed or wanton malice, “without any prior knowledge,” that is, without any prior judicial investigation in the parish concerned, nor on the basis of a judicial judgment passed by the same on the sinner according to God's Word, through their officiates (their representatives in court matters), then the execution of excommunication must be handed back to the parish priests and transferred back to the parishes, so that it may be practiced “properly,” namely as just stated, by the entire congregation. Therefore,

Luther also says: "You hear here (Matthew 18) that there must be certain public sins, of certain known persons, where one brother sees another sinning, and such sins that have been punished fraternally beforehand and finally convicted publicly before the congregation, therefore the bulls and letters of excommunication, in which it is written: *Excommunicamus ipso facto, lata sententia, trina tamen monitione praemissa*. *Item, de plenitudine potestatis*. In German, this means an execrable ban; I call it the devil's ban and not God's ban, since people are banned for wicked deeds before they are publicly convicted before the congregation, contrary to Christ's order. Likewise, all excommunications are used by the officials and ecclesiastical courts to deceive, since they excommunicate people 10, 20, 30 miles away, banish people with a piece of paper before a community, even though they have never been punished, accused, or convicted in that community and before the parish priest, but come from a bat, from an official's corner, without witnesses and without God's command. You must not fear such bullshit excommunications. If a bishop or official wants to excommunicate someone, let him go or send him to the parish and before the parish priest, where the same is to be excommunicated, and do to him as is right, according to these words of Christ. And I say all this because: For the congregation that is to keep such a person excommunicated should know and be certain how he deserves excommunication and how he came to it, as Christ's text gives here; otherwise it might be deceived and accept a false excommunication and thereby do wrong to its neighbor. That would be blasphemy against the keys and a desecration of God and a violation of love for one's neighbor, which a Christian community cannot tolerate, for it also belongs to it when someone is to be excommunicated, says Christ here, and it is not guilty of believing the official's note or the bishop's letter; indeed, it is guilty of not believing here, for one should not believe men in matters of God. Thus, a Christian community is not the official's servant, nor the bishop's executioner, that he may say to it: there is Greta, there is Hans, keep this one or that one in excommunication. Oh yes, you are welcome, dear official. In worldly authority, such a thing might have some meaning, but here, since it concerns the

souls, the congregation should also be with the judge and his wife. St. Paul was an apostle, yet he did not want to excommunicate the man who had taken his stepmother; he wanted the congregation to be there too. 1 Cor. 5:1, 5." (Writing on the Keys. 1530. XIX, 1181. F. [StL 19, 950; AE 40:370 ff.]) A preacher must therefore not instruct his congregation to excommunicate a man as soon as he says that he belongs in excommunication. This is what Grabau did. He also gathered the congregation and presented the case to them, but woe betide anyone who would have protested against his pastoral decision! However, the congregation should not only be present, but, as Luther expressly says, “also with judge and wife,” i.e., *domina* = mistress of the house; the pastor only has to carry out the excommunication publicly in the name of the congregation. That this remained the teaching of our church even at the time of the worst state church violence against the congregations is attested to, among other things, by the following words of

V. E. Löscher: "In our church, no one has ever said that excommunication and discipline are the sole prerogative of the clergy, but that they are commanded by Christ to the church; the church recognizes and decrees, and Christ's servants, as the mouthpiece of the church, announce this to sinners and, according to Christ's order, have the exercise or execution of the binding key.“ (Unschuld. Nachrr. Year 1724. p. 476.) Therefore, the answer to the question, ”What is the office of the keys?" in our

Small Catechism: “The office of the keys is the special power of the church, which Christ has given to his church on earth, to forgive the sins of repentant sinners, but to retain the sins of the unrepentant as long as they do not repent.”

Finally, as regards the power concerning ecclesiastical matters, it follows from the fact that the preacher is not a lord but a servant of the congregation and that he cannot command anything that Christ has not commanded, that the preacher cannot have authority over ecclesiastical matters of means, but that this authority rather belongs to the collegial rights of the entire congregation (both the listeners and the teachers). We find proof of this in God's Word, Acts 6:1 ff. For here we are told: When the holy apostles came to the conclusion that the establishment of an office of almsgiving was necessary for the prosperity of the congregation, they did not simply establish this order on their own authority, but presented the matter to the congregation and advised it to establish this office, and only offered, once this had been done, to “appoint” those chosen by the church for “this necessity.” From this we can also see how it is to be understood when, for example, the apostle writes to the Corinthians: “The other things I will

arrange when I come" (1 Cor. 11:34), or when the same apostle writes to Titus: "For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things left unfinished and appoint elders in every city." (Titus 1:5). The involvement of the apostle and Titus in these matters apparently consisted only in advising and instructing the congregations and carrying out what they decided.

Admittedly, the Augsburg Confession states "that bishops or pastors may establish order," [XXVIII 53] which is what Romanizing Lutherans usually refer to; but by this the Augsburg Confession only means that we Lutherans did not want to forcibly wrest this power, which the bishops had at that time by human right, from them, provided they used it rightly and, of course, established all orders with the consent of the congregations. For when the Augsburg Confession speaks of the power that bishops or pastors have by divine right, it omits the power to establish order. For we read in the

Augsburg Confession: "Therefore, the episcopal office according to divine rights is to preach the Gospel, forgive sins, judge doctrine, and reject doctrine contrary to the Gospel, and to exclude the ungodly, whose ungodly nature is evident, from the Christian communion, without human authority, but solely through God's Word. And in this case, the clergy and churches are obliged to obey the bishops. ... But the fact that the bishops otherwise have power and judicial authority (jurisdiction) in certain matters, namely marriage matters or tithes, they have by virtue of human rights." (AC XXVIII 21-22, 29) Therefore,

Joh. Benedikt Carpzov adds the following to the words of the Augsburg Confession in his introduction to the symbolic books of our church: "The bishops or pastors may establish order," etc. (Art. 28): "It should be noted that when the Augsburg Confession grants bishops the right to regulate ceremonies at this point, this should be done: 1. in accordance with the nature of that time, when this was also granted to them by human law, as mentioned in the section beginning with the words: 'But that the bishops otherwise' (in addition to what is also due to them by divine right) 'have power and judicial authority,' etc., had mentioned; 2. that thereby nothing is taken away from the rights of the whole church, as the Augsburg Confession indicates quite clearly." Earlier, Carpzov had already added to those words of the Augsburg Confession: "All this, however, does not exclude the consent of the church, but rather includes it, so that

here the bishops always have the agreement of the church with them, and such orders may not be made without the consent or against the will of the church." (*Isagog. in libb. symbol*. p. 750. 745.)

Johann Gerhard therefore rightly writes: "Some count among the powers of the preaching office ... also the constitutive power, which is the power of the church, in external matters and means, to establish rules and regulations that serve order and propriety, as well as certain customs, and to promote the unity of the members of the church in external worship, or to abolish them, as the needs or benefits of the church require; but these powers belong to the whole church and are not peculiar to the ecclesiastical office." (*Loc. de minister. ecclesiast*. § 193.)

"Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40) is the only thing a preacher can conscientiously insist on in external matters of the congregation, for that is God's clear command. But how this exhortation is to be followed, namely, which of the various good orders and ceremonies are to be chosen, the preacher cannot determine in the slightest without the consent of the congregation. Otherwise, he presumes to rule over consciences, an honor that belongs to God alone. —

Up to this point, the synod had proceeded with its doctrinal deliberations and had confessed individually to each thesis and what had been said about it. However, because of the importance of the subject, it was decided to ask the speaker, Dr. Walther, to present the paper on the remaining two theses to the synod in an appropriate manner.

13 [1885 Western District Convention essay by Walther] ^

# Doctrinal proceedings.

For twelve years, our district has discussed the following general topic at its annual synod meetings: "That only through the doctrine of the Lutheran Church is all glory given to God alone—irrefutable proof that its doctrine is the only true one." After the first theses on this general theme had been presented as an introduction, showing why only that religion and, accordingly, only that church is true which gives all glory to God alone through all its doctrine, we then tested twelve main doctrines of our church and were delighted to see that our church also passed this test.

14 [1885 Western District Convention essay by Walther]

Those twelve main doctrines were as follows: 1) the Word of God, 2) the cause of sin, death, hell, and damnation, 3) Divine Providence, 4) The General Will of God, 5) The Atonement and Redemption of the Human Race, 6) The Justification of Sinners by Grace Alone Through Faith in Jesus Christ Without the Merit of Works, 7) The Necessity of Rebirth, Sanctification, and Good Works, 8) The Establishment, validity, power, and immutability of the means of grace, 9) of conversion, 10) of the election of grace, 11) of the invocation and worship of God, and finally 12) of obedience to men in matters of faith and conscience.

With the statement that even in this twelfth highly important doctrine, only the Lutheran Church gives all glory to God alone, we did not come to a conclusion at our last meeting (1883). We were initially only convinced that Lutheran doctrine decisively rejects all coercion of conscience exercised by human beings within the church. The last two theses concerning the doctrine of coercion of conscience, namely that no one should rule over faith and conscience even in the state and household governance, are before us this year.

Accordingly, our main topic today is once again the following:

**That only through the doctrine of the Lutheran Church is all glory given to God alone, as is also evident from its doctrine of obedience to human beings in matters of faith and conscience.**

Thesis VII.

The Lutheran Church further believes, teaches, and confesses according to God's Word that even **secular authorities** have neither the right nor the power to rule over the faith and conscience of their subjects.

(It should be noted in advance that each part of the following thesis refers to the passage in which people [respectively secular authorities] can demand obedience from us, in which we therefore have no freedom according to God's Word. On the one hand, this is intended to reject the abuse and misunderstanding that some associate with freedom of conscience, but on the other hand, it is also intended to show that the Lutheran Church is well aware of and respects the limits of this freedom set by God's Word, thus also giving glory to God in this matter.)

15 [1885 Western District Convention essay by Walther]

**Thesis VII, 1.**

**The Lutheran Church believes, teaches, and confesses according to God's Word that a. subjects may not resist the secular authorities by force, even if they do them injustice, but that b. the secular authorities have no right to command their subjects to do what God has forbidden, or to forbid what God has commanded, or to compel them to do anything against their conscience.**

According to Lutheran teaching, subjects must obey the secular authorities, whatever they may command, provided that they are not thereby compelled to act against their own conscience. The Lutheran Church declares the authorities to be God's servants. It is therefore not a matter of obedience to human beings as human beings, but to God's majesty itself, of which the authorities are a reflection. This also means, of course, that the authorities may not demand anything that violates the commandment of the one who is also their Lord. In such cases, obedience must be refused. In all other matters, however, their commandment is divinely binding.

We maintain that this doctrine of our church gives all honor to God. We cannot measure the honor that is due to God according to our reason or our feelings. We could easily be very mistaken in doing so. Calvin also believed that he was giving honor to God with his doctrine of absolute election and rejection, and yet with this doctrine he robbed God of the honor that is due to Him according to Scripture, the honor of His love and righteousness. The Word of God alone can judge this matter. Let us hear what it says about this.

Romans 13:1–7 is the basis for the doctrine of authority. First, it tells us who our authorities are. “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God.” Whether they came into office lawfully, whether they are pious, or whether they share our faith, cannot therefore be decisive here. Christianity allows secular orders to exist; it only wants to change the hearts of men. This is important for the spread of the Christian church. What godless prince would allow the Christian religion to enter his country if it condoned rebellion against those who came into office unlawfully or who abused their authority? It is also clear from this that anyone who emigrates to another country or travels through such a country is then again subject to the authorities under whose power he places himself. It should be noted here that at the very time when the Apostle Paul wrote this to the Romans, the bloodhound

Nero sat on the Roman imperial throne and used his power to cruelly torture Christians. But, says the Apostle, all that makes no difference; he has the "power"; thus he is the authority appointed by God. — We should be subject to the authorities that have power over us; otherwise, we sin not only against a human being, but against God Himself. "For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. "It is not merely a disturbance of the public peace when one resists the secular authorities, but actually a fight against the divine majesty. Therefore, we should "be subject for the sake of necessity," but "not only for the sake of punishment, but for the sake of God and conscience." (v. 5.) We should also give Nero the honor he deserves (v. 7.), not only outwardly with gestures, but also in our hearts; for he has the power of the great God. That is why the apostle himself speaks in verses 3 and 4 of the works of the authorities in such a way that he completely disregards the state of the Roman authorities of his time and only considers the will of God in the establishment of the authorities. "Everyone" is required to be subject to the authorities, including preachers; it is antichristian when popes and priests exempt themselves from this general divine commandment.

In the Catholic and Reformed churches, conscience is not sharpened in this matter. History shows the consequences of this. While there has never been any talk of revolution among truly Lutheran citizens and in truly Lutheran countries, unless the Lutheran church had ceased to exist in them, even in times of the most terrible oppression of Lutherans, we read much in the pages of history about revolts against the authorities in Catholic and Reformed countries. The Lutheran Church can therefore sing with all its heart:

> "What do you fear, enemy Herod,
> That Christ, the Lord, is born to us?
> He seeks no mortal kingdom,
> He brings us the kingdom of heaven." (Hymn No. 60, 1.)

1 Peter 2:13-17 is the second passage that belongs here. "Be subject to every human institution" (not as if the authorities were an institution made by men, but as a creation [*κτίσις*] of God among men) "for the Lord's sake." And we owe obedience and honor not only "to the king, as the supreme authority," but also "to the magistrates, as his messengers." In our country, for example, it is not the president, Congress, etc., but the people who are

sovereign. But if we resist these officials appointed by the people, we resist the sovereignty of the people and thus God himself.

When the people of Israel, tired of their free constitution, demanded a king like the surrounding heathen nations had, Samuel had to proclaim to them, on God's command, “the rights of the king who would rule over them.” (1 Sam. 8: 9-20). They were not to resist his power, even if the exercise of that power involved flagrant injustice and arbitrariness. Yes, even if they cried out to the Lord about their king, they would not be heard, for whoever demands a real king should also know what his rights are.

Another passage is Matthew 26:51–52. One would think that if there ever was a time when a Christian could have resisted the authorities, it would have been at that moment when Peter saw the life of his Lord and Savior in danger. But Christ says, “Put your sword back in its place, for whoever takes up the sword will perish by the sword.” Christ declares that Peter's attempt to defend him against the servants of the Sanhedrin by using force is a robbery of the sword and therefore a sin worthy of death.

John 19:10-11 is an exceedingly wonderful passage. For there the Lord of glory Himself submits to the authority of Pilate and concedes to him that he has the power to crucify him. At the same time, however, He declares to him that he is committing a great sin if he uses the power given to him by God for this purpose.

Proverbs 24:21 warns everyone against associations that harbor rebellious plans.

All these passages tell us that we must not resist tyrannical authorities with violence. But the Lord gives us one permission in Matthew 10:23: “When they persecute you in one city, flee to another.” It is therefore not revolution when one withdraws from the power of the authorities without using violence. Thus, the Apostle Paul once fled from Damascus before the governor of King Aretas, who wanted to seize him. (2 Cor. 11:32-33)

We see that the Lutheran Church teaches this from its public confessions, as well as from the writings of its orthodox teachers:

This is stated in Article 16 of the Augsburg Confession: "The Gospel does not teach an outward, temporal, but an inward, eternal nature and righteousness of the heart, and does not reject worldly government, police, and marriage, but wants one to keep all these as a true order, and in such states to prove Christian love and truly good works, each according to his calling. Therefore, Christians are obliged to be subject to the authorities and to obey their

commands in everything that can be done without sin." (Article XVI. Müller's Book of Concord, p. 42 f.)

Apology of the Augsburg Confession: “The Gospel not only brings laws into the world order, but also commands and requires that we obey the laws and the authorities under which we live, whether they be pagans or Christians, and that we show our love in such obedience.” (Article XVI. Müller p. 215.)

Dannhauer makes it clear more than others what is to be understood by the “right” of a king. He writes regarding 1 Sam. 8:11: "That a king who is entitled to this right, even though he is a tyrant in practice, should not be attacked by force by his subjects, is easily proven: 1. from the divine description given in 1 Sam. 8: 'Now therefore obey their voice. But testify to them and proclaim to them the right of the king who will rule over them,‘ vv. 9-18, where Samuel, in presenting the royal ’right,' is undoubtedly not speaking of the just and lawful right; for Deut. 17:14-20 is far from consistent with this; nor does he speak of the mere fact (that the king will behave in this way), for there would be nothing special in this, since private individuals also do wrong to other private individuals; but rather of a fact with the effect of a legal obligation not to resist. Royal law is therefore such that it must not be resisted, but one may appeal only to God as the avenger of injustice. 2. From the apostolic admonition against resistance, Rom. 13:1, which had to be accepted no less by the tyrant Nero than by the milder lord Tiberius, who was more lenient toward Christians. 3. From the prohibition against encroaching on a foreign office, 1 Peter 4:15. For since the sword given according to Romans 13:4 is the business of the authorities, and the sword taken according to Matthew 26:52 is the business of the subjects, he who seizes it encroaches on a foreign office. 4. From the necessity of order and public peace, which cannot exist if everyone has the right of resistance, and degenerates into cyclopean existence." (*Lib. conscient. I, 873*)

(Calov and some other orthodox theologians even find the legal authority of a king described in 1 Sam. 8.)

Dannhauer also proves that one must also be subject to an authority that has come into office unlawfully, as follows: "This also includes the long-standing statute of limitations, which is recognized in Judg. 11:28; for if this did not apply, what rule would then be valid?

How many kings, if one goes back to their origins, have a legal claim to power?“ ”Otherwise, however,“ Dannhauer adds, ”the subject also retains for a short time the right that everyone has against a public enemy; but in such a way that, as long as the power to resist is lacking, the rule of the latter has binding force, not because it is right, but because it is probable that the one who has the right to rule would rather have what is commanded be valid in the meantime than have everything thrown into confusion by the abolition of laws and courts." (*Lib. conscientiae, I, 872. sq.*)

It is well known that the Romans acquired almost all their provinces through unlawful conquests; nevertheless, Christ submits to the Roman governor Pilate, and the apostles exhort all Christians of their time to be obedient to the Romans. For a time, as has been said, citizens have the right to oppose a conqueror and usurper who has invaded their country, as was the case, for example, in the time of Napoleon I. In such a case, every citizen is a soldier. But as soon as such a conqueror establishes himself, he becomes the authority that binds people to obedience, for he has the power that ultimately makes him the valid authority.

Spener expresses himself as follows on this subject: “It should be noted that the authority also has a divine calling, for it is” (according to God's word in Romans 13:4, 6) “God's servant, and yet such a calling is not always such that everything would have gone according to divine order, but rather it is a divine decree, and it proceeds in such a way that nothing divine can be found in it except the power itself.” (Theol. Bedenken. Hallische Ausgabe. IV, 523.)

Ad. Osiander: "The form of government is one thing, and power is another. Power, and indeed the highest power, denotes the rights of majesty, dominion, and sovereignty... . Aristocracy“ (in which the nobles have power) ”and democracy“ (in which the people have power) ”are accidental forms of government, which the Apostle in Romans 13:1 does not take into account, to which the subjects are not subject as such, but to the highest power, which is also found in aristocracy and democracy." (*Colleg. th. VIII, 3.*)

Luther: “I stand and will always stand with the party that suffers rebellion, as it always has unjust cause; and against the party that causes rebellion, however right it should always be.” (Faithful admonition to all Christians to guard against rebellion and revolt. From the year 1522. X, 413 [StL 10, 365; cf. AE 45:63])

Gerhard: “Augustine writes in his treatise on the City of God (6, 21): ‘He who gave imperial power to Constantine the Christian

also gave it to Julian the Apostate.’” (*L. de magistr. § 79*.)

Balth. Bidembach writes on the story of King Saul's attendants, who were ordered to kill the innocent priests of the Lord but did not carry out this order: “Although they did not kill the priests of the Lord, they did not take them from the king by force, but let it happen; for otherwise it would have looked like a revolt and rebellion against the king.” (Explanation of the 1st and 2nd Books of Samuel, p. 301.) —

According to modern constitutions in so-called constitutional monarchies, part of the sovereign power is reserved for a representation of the people, the estates, etc.

Dannhauer expresses his opinion on the extent to which the latter owe allegiance to the head of state in the following: "It is not right for a subject to take up the sword, which is in the full sense of the word and nothing more; however, if the king (only) has part of the supreme power, the other part being held by the people, the Senate, then the king, if he wants to seize the part that is not his, can rightly be opposed (also) by force, because he does not have sovereignty in this respect; which (as Hugo Grotius argues in his booklet on the right of peace and war) is also the case even if the power of war were in the hands of the king. For this is to be understood in terms of war against external enemies, since everyone who has a part of the supreme power must necessarily also have the right to defend and assert that part." (*Lib. conscient. I, 871*.)

The relationship between the German princes and the emperor in Luther's time was similar. Luther did not want to decide the question of whether the princes could resist the emperor by force if he exceeded his rights, but referred the decision to the lawyers; however, Luther ultimately relied on the same decision. When, during the Thirty Years' War, the emperor assumed rights and asserted them against the Lutherans, which did not belong to him according to the imperial constitution he had sworn to uphold, Lutheran theologians were prompted to distinguish between absolute and limited monarchy, as well as between pure subjects and those who share in sovereign rights, e.g., the estates of the empire. —

But what if the authorities demand that we do something that is sin? Then our church teaches that we must refuse to obey. God has not given us any such commandment that, by obeying it, we would have to transgress another of his commandments. For then we would be sinning, whether we chose to obey one or the other.

21 [1885 Western District Convention essay by Walther]

The second half of the first part of the thesis states:

The Lutheran Church believes, teaches, and confesses according to God's Word that the secular authorities b. have no right to command their subjects to do what God has forbidden, or to forbid what God has commanded, or to compel them to do anything against their conscience.

Note that our church does not teach that secular authorities have no right to permit anything, that is, to declare unpunishable what God has forbidden. They do indeed have this right. Even Moses, as a political legislator, permitted many things that the prophets condemn. The authorities do not have only Christians among them who are governed by God's Word; nor should they actually govern the state, which is not an institution for the salvation of souls but for the protection of body and property, according to God's Word, but according to reason. However, a prohibition by God does not lose its binding force through the permission of the authorities. If, for example, the authorities license sinful pleasures, divorces for trivial reasons, or the keeping of drinking establishments, a Christian cannot make use of this permission. The authorities must permit such things for the sake of the "hardness of heart" of their subjects, in order to avoid rebellion, murder, and manslaughter. Therefore, when the Pharisees once asked Christ the question in order to gloss over their false doctrine on divorce: "Why then did Moses command that a certificate of divorce be given and that she be divorced?" Christ answered, "Moses allowed you to divorce your wives because of the hardness of your hearts, but from the beginning it was not so." Matthew 19:7-8.

However, the authorities have no right to command sin. If they do so nevertheless, God's commandment takes precedence over the commandment of the authorities. We see this clearly from the passages cited. When Christ adds the admonition "And give to God what is God's" to the words "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's" in Matthew 22:21, the latter is clearly a restriction of the former. Christ means to say: There is a King above all kings; therefore, His commandments are far above the commandments of all human kings. If the latter contradict the former, they are null and void; indeed, they must not be obeyed under any circumstances, lest one take away the glory from God.

This is how the Church of God has always acted. Acts 4:18-19 recounts the example of the apostles, who did not cease to proclaim the name of Christ on his command, even when the Sanhedrin forbade them to do so and punished them for it. They therefore establish the rule in Acts 5:29: "We must obey God rather than men."

1 Samuel 22:17 recounts that Saul's guards did not carry out their king's command to kill the priests of the Lord, because they

knew that it was no crime for those priests to support David, who had already been anointed king by God's command. — Another example is that of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who refused to worship the golden image despite Nebuchadnezzar's command (Dan. 3:1-30), as well as the example of Daniel, who prayed publicly to the true God three times a day, even though Darius had issued a strict command that for thirty days no one except him should be asked for anything. (Dan. 6:5-10.) Finally, the story of the midwives in Egypt (Ex. 1:17-21) belongs here, who, out of fear of God, did not carry out Pharaoh's cruel command, but let the Hebrew boys live, for which God rewarded them with temporal blessings.

The Lutheran Church teaches this in complete accordance with Holy Scripture.

The Augsburg Confession states: “If the command of the authorities cannot be obeyed without sin, one must be more obedient to God than to men. Acts 5:29.” (AC XVI, 6-7)

What is the work of the Lutheran Reformation other than obedience to the words: “One must obey God rather than men”? Blind Pharisees see the Reformation as a rebellion against the authorities. It was not. Only in obedience to the commandment of God, the supreme Lord, did the purified church not submit to the commandment of the secular authorities, who wanted to force it into false worship.

In his 1523 treatise “On Secular Authority, How Far One Owed Obedience to It,” Luther says: "The secular government has laws that extend no further than body and property and what is outwardly on earth. For God can and will allow no one to rule over the soul except Himself alone. Therefore, where secular power fails to give law to the soul, God intervenes in its rule and only seduces and corrupts souls." (X, 452; [StL 10, 395; cf. AE 45:105])

Miesler also gives a very good reason for this when he writes: "Actually, directly, immediately, and in itself, conscience connects nothing except divine law. 1. Because conscience or the soul is actually subject only to God. 2. The rule of conscience is the law of God written in the heart. Rom. 2:15. Human (civil) laws, however, must be observed for the sake of conscience before God. Rom. 13:5: ‘Be subject, then, for the sake of necessity, not only because of punishment, but also for the sake of conscience’; because God's law has established this order and authority and commands that the same submission and obedience be rendered." (*Opus novum quaest. practico-theol. fol. 543*.)

The godly jurist Reinking says: "When a godless Saul commands his attendants to kill the Lord's priests and shed innocent blood (1 Sam. 22: 17), no honest servant should or must carry it out, unless it is commendably recorded by the Holy Spirit in Scripture that, on the command of their king, they do not want to lay their hands on the priests of the Lord to kill them, contrary to God's commandment and the love of their neighbor." (*Biblische Polizei*, Book II. Axiom 54.)

Luther wrote the following in 1524, when a man from Orlamund wanted to ask the Elector whether he could take a second wife to his first: “If he is otherwise uncertain, he cannot be sure through the consent of the prince, whose office it is not to decide anything in this matter, and since it is the office of the priests to answer God's Word, from whose mouth one must seek the law of the Lord, as Malachi (2:7) says.” (Letters, collected by de Wette II, 459.) Cf. Matthew 19:7–9.

But just as the permission of the authorities does not excuse an action that God has forbidden, neither does it justify before God that one allows oneself to be forced by the authorities to do something sinful. For example, a Christian soldier should rather give up his life than go to war at the behest of his king in an unjust war.

Balth. Bidembach writes on this subject: "Soldiers who serve a lord in unjust causes are also doing wrong; burning several miles of road, robbing, murdering innocent people, etc., and their supposed excuses are of no value, that they say: Well, I don't know whether the lord is right or wrong; I will let him answer for it. No, don't you know what St. Paul says: ‘Each one shall bear his own burden,’ and if you don't know whether he is right or wrong, why don't you stay at home? Who is forcing you? You are guilty of all the evil that is done there. *) And even if you are chosen and see that wrong is about to be done, you should still not help. Or you must not say: If I don't do it, someone else will. No, let Doeg do it, keep your hands clean. It would be good if no one did it; but if someone must do it, it is much better for you that someone else does it than you. God says, “Thou shalt not kill,” thou shalt not do it, let another do what he will, see to thyself. No one will go to heaven or hell for thee. Each one will bear his own burden, as has been said." (Explanation of 1 and 2 Samuel, p. 302.)

The following testimonies provide scriptural clarification on all kinds of difficult moral issues that belong here.

*) At that time, soldiers were usually not conscripted, but recruited.

Luther: “What if a prince” (who goes to war) "is in the wrong, are his people still obliged to follow him? Answer: No, for no one ought to act against justice; rather, ‘one must obey God (who demands justice) rather than men’. Acts 5:29. — What if the subjects did not know whether he was right or not? Answer: Because they do not know, nor can they find out through diligent inquiry, they may follow him without danger to their souls. For in such a case, one must apply the law of Moses, Exodus 21:13, where he writes that a murderer who kills someone unwittingly and unwillingly shall be acquitted by fleeing to a free city and by the court. (On secular authority, to what extent one is obliged to obey it. X, 475; [StL 10, 413; cf. AE 45:125f.] )

The same: “What if my lord is wrong to wage war? Answer: If you know for certain that he is wrong, you should fear God more and ”obey God rather than men," Acts 5:29, 29, and you shall not fight nor serve; for you cannot have a good conscience before God. Yes (you say), my lord compels me, takes my fief, does not give me my money, wages, and pay, and on top of that I would be despised and reviled as a coward, yes, as a traitor before the world, who abandons his lord in times of need, etc. Answer: You must dare to do this and, for God's sake, let go of what is going on; he can well repay you a hundredfold, as he promises in the Gospel, Matthew 19:29: “Whoever leaves house, farm, wife, and possessions for my sake shall receive a hundredfold in return,” etc. One must also expect such danger in all other works, since the authorities compel one to do wrong. But since God also wants us to forsake our father and mother for his sake, we must of course also forsake our master for his sake, etc. But if you do not know, or cannot find out, whether your master is unjust, you should not weaken your uncertain obedience for the sake of uncertain justice, but rather do your best for your master in a loving manner. For “love believes all things and thinks no evil” (1 Cor. 13:7). In this way you will be safe and will conduct yourself well before God. “ (Considerations on whether soldiers can also be in a blessed state. 1527. X, 614 f. [StL 10, 524 f.; cf. AE 46:130 f.])

The same: “But this is my faithful advice, that if the emperor were to raise an army and wage war against us for the sake of the pope's affairs or our doctrine, as the papists now boastfully and defiantly proclaim (but I do not yet consider myself the emperor), that in such a case no man should allow himself to be used for this purpose, nor be obedient to the emperor, but be certain that it is strictly forbidden by God to obey the emperor in such a case, and whoever obeys him should know that he is disobeying the dear Lord and will lose his body and soul for eternity. For the emperor then acts not only against God and divine law, but also against his own imperial rights, oaths,

duties, seals, and letters. *) [*) Therefore, passive disobedience is also permitted, indeed commanded, for private individuals.]... The first reason why you should not obey and fight for the emperor in such a case is this: that you (as well as the emperor himself) have sworn at Baptism to keep the Gospel of Christ and not to persecute or dispute it. Now you know that the emperor is being incited and deceived by the pope to fight against the Gospel of Christ, because our doctrine has been publicly declared at Augsburg to be the true Gospel and Holy Scripture. And you shall say to the summons of the emperor or your prince: Yes, dear emperor, dear prince, if you keep your oath and duty made at Baptism, you shall be my dear lord, and I will be obedient to you if you wish. But if you do not keep your baptismal duty and Christian covenant made with Christ, but persecute it, then let a rogue be obedient to you in my place, for I will not blaspheme my God and persecute His Word for your sake, and so boldly run and leap with you into the abyss of hell." (Warning to his dear Germans. 1531. XVI, 1985. 1991 f. [StL 16, 1641, 1647; cf. AE 47:30, 35])

The same tells a wonderful example of this from ancient church history. "The dear holy martyrs, St. Moritz and his companions, when the emperor ordered them to fight against the Christians, did not want to do so, threw away their weapons and said: if he wanted to fight against the Christians, he should not look for others, they themselves were there as Christians, ready to suffer whatever he wanted. So you too should serve the Turks in such a way that you do not strive against Christians or against God, but only help his house and his possessions for the best." (Army sermon against the Turks. From the year 1529. XX, 2739 f. [StL 20, 2193;]) **)

**) According to Kurz, the essence of this story told by Theodoret is that St. Mauritius, as *tribunus militum* (commander-in-chief), was executed on Maximian's orders (around 286) in Apomea in Syria with only 70 soldiers. Others claim that an entire legion (6600), the Legio Thebaica, was slaughtered.

When, in 1542, Duke Moritz (about whom Luther once said, when asked about Elector Johann Friedrich: “Take care, gracious lord, that you do not raise a young lion.” Wernicke's *Weltgesch*. Vol. III. Section 1. p. 113) wanted to force free passage through the electoral city of Wurzen by force of arms, Luther wrote the following to both parties (Elector Johann Friedrich and Duke Moritz): “And since God is for him (for me, yes, you, my dear Lord Jesus Christ, together with all who pray with me, will graciously protect him), that a prince or province” (= provincial estates) "should deny peace and justice and run counter to God and pursue vengeful wrath: in that case, which God graciously avert, I will side with the party, be it my most gracious lord, the elector and provincial estates, or

my gracious lord, Duke Moritz and provincial estates (for there is no hypocrisy here, I speak before God to my conscience), I say, in that case, I will side with that party that offers peace and justice, can suffer, and desires it. For even if the other side had the highest right and could justly use anger, it condemns itself by taking God into its own hands, wanting to be judge and avenger itself, and thereby forcing the opposite of self-defense and judging it with its actions and making it innocent, but destroying itself with the law, as has been said above. For it is said: "*Quod justum est, juste exequaris*" (What is just, you must also execute justly). "*Et mea est vindicta*" (And vengeance is mine). And then that party that seeks justice and peace shall defend itself confidently and cheerfully, and praise only that I have commanded, advised, and admonished it in God's stead. For I will take upon myself the blood and damnation of that party, and must do so well. And if it should come to pass, God forbid, that you should go to war or otherwise come to attack, then bow your heads here toward Wittenberg to us and receive our hands, which I hereby also promise, for the forgiveness of sin, as those who defend themselves out of necessity and willingly " (judicial decision) "and thus also be righteous before God in this matter, and believe in our absolution. After that, be confident and fearless, let your spears and guns go to the children of strife, anger, and vengeance; God's will be done: whoever dies, dies blessed" (insofar as this matter is concerned), "in obedience and self-defense, to protect his prince and country. We must not fear death from a living devil, much less from mortal poor human beings. To the other vengeful, unpeaceful crowd, I hereby proclaim that they should know and have no excuse on the Last Day and Judgment Day that they have excommunicated themselves and given themselves up to God's vengeance and, if they perish in war, they must be eternally damned with body and soul. For they not only wage war without faith, but also bring evil consciences into battle in worldly law. And I also faithfully advise that whoever fights under such a quarrelsome prince should run as fast as he can from the battlefield, save his soul, and leave his vengeful, senseless prince alone to fight with those who want to go to hell with him. For no one is compelled, but rather forbidden, to obey princes and lords or to keep oaths to the damnation of his soul, that is, against God and justice. It is said: '*Hoc possum, quod jure possum*' (I can do what I can do by right)." (Admonition to peace to Elector John Frederick and Duke Maurice of Saxony, concerning the sudden uprising that arose around Würzburg. Anno 1542, April 7. XVII, 1813 ff. [StL 17, 1444 ff.])

Six days later, Luther writes to Amsdorf: “We have committed these war disturbances to God the Father through faithful prayers and do not cease, being certain that everything is being directly instigated by Satan himself on the part of Duke Moritz, this furious and arrogant young man. The whole matter is supposed to be about Moritz's free passage through Würzburg.” (See Luther's letters from de Wette. Vol. V, p. 461 [StL 17, 1446])

When the emperor wanted to forbid the Protestant estates in Augsburg in 1530 from allowing their preachers to preach in Augsburg during the Imperial Diet, explaining that his conscience commanded him to demand the cessation of the sermons, Landgrave Philip of Hesse took the floor and said: “His Imperial Majesty's conscience is not lord and master over our conscience.” (See: Herzog's *Real-Encyklopädie*, 2nd edition. Vol. XI, p. 585.)

**Thesis VII, 2.**

**The Lutheran Church further believes, teaches, and confesses according to God's Word that a. the secular authorities are indeed obliged to protect the church in its freedom against injustice and, insofar as they (the authorities) consist of persons who are members of the church, to serve it with their power, but that they b. have neither the right nor the power to usurp the government of the church and to compel it to adhere to the true faith, or what they consider to be the true faith.**

a. We so-called Missourians are suspected of wanting to deny the authorities any influence over the church and of viewing those princes, who once did so much for the Lutheran church and suffered so much for it, with blind fanaticism and shameful ingratitude toward men who, by encroaching on a foreign office, have godlessly assumed dominion over the church and thus laid the foundation for the present disastrous enslavement of the church under state authority. But this is an injustice to us. Rather, we remember the old Lutheran princes with deep reverence and the most heartfelt gratitude for the many benefits they bestowed upon the church at the cost of the greatest sacrifices, endangering their bodies and lives and enduring the reproach of Christ. For although, according to God's Word, the authorities should not rule in the Church, they nevertheless have the general duty to take care of the Church as a society within the state. Without claiming special privileges for our church from the authorities, we nevertheless demand that they respect our freedoms and

rights the same protection that all other societies within the state enjoy. We are convinced that just as the authorities, when they neglect some of their subjects in favor of others, neglect their duty to exercise justice, namely to give each his due (*suum cuique*), so too they act contrary to their duty as authorities when they protect other communities within their territory in their freedom but deny this protection to the church. We therefore highly praise our local authorities for not only refraining from interfering in the government of the church themselves, but also for not tolerating others interfering in it. However, we are convinced that those in authority have a double obligation to do so if they themselves are members of the church, because every Christian should put his gifts at the service of Christ and his kingdom.

Thus we find the authorities described in the prophecies of Isaiah 49:23 and 60:16, where the Lord says to Zion: “The kings shall be your guardians, and their princesses your nursing mothers.” — "The kings' breasts shall nurse you; that you may know that I, the Lord, am your Savior, and I, the Mighty One of Jacob, am your Redeemer." In Germany, people believe that they are living in fulfillment of these words. But the opposite is true. The authorities oppress and persecute pure doctrine and fill the pulpits and chairs with those who undermine the foundations of the house of God.

Acts 23:10-31 and 21:30-40 tell how the Roman captain protected the apostle Paul in the exercise of his office from the hostilities of the Jews. The judge Gallio in Corinth, on the other hand, violated his official duty by allowing Sosthenes to be beaten before his judgment seat for the sake of religion (Acts 18:17).

1 Tim. 2:1-2. Christians are exhorted to pray for the authorities, “that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty”; thus indicating in the most glorious way the duty of the authorities toward the church, not only when the authorities are also members of the church, but especially then.

We therefore wholeheartedly profess the following passage from the Smalcald Articles: "Especially, kings and princes, as the most distinguished members of the church, should help and see to it that all kinds of error are removed and that consciences are rightly instructed, as God especially exhorts kings and princes to do in Psalm 2:10: ‘O ye kings, be wise; ye judges of the earth, be just.’ For this should be the foremost concern of kings and great lords, that they diligently promote the glory of God. Therefore, it would be unjust if they were to use their power and authority

to preserve such abominable idolatry and countless other vices and to allow pious Christians to be so miserably murdered... But since the judgments are those of the councils of the Church, and not those of the Pope, it is incumbent upon kings and princes not to allow the Pope such license, but to ensure that the Church's power to judge is not taken away, and that everything is judged according to the Holy Scriptures and the Word of God." (*Treatise On the Power and Primacy of the Pope*, § 54, 56.)

Admittedly, this passage is often cited as proof that, according to Lutheran doctrine, the state must govern the church. But the word "especially" already indicates that this refers to a general Christian duty, which Christian princes are better able to exercise in their high position. That is why they are not referred to here insofar as they are princes, but insofar as they are members of the church.

The following, among other things, serves as proof that Luther really meant it this way. He writes: "The calling and election of orthodox ministers is not actually and originally a matter for the authorities, but for the church. But if the authorities are faithful and members of the church, then they call them, not because they are authorities, but because they are members of the church." (*Unschuldige Nachrichten*. Year 1715. p. 383)

The same: "Our secular rulers must now be emergency bishops and protect us pastors and preachers (since the Pope and his gang do not do so, but rather oppose it), and help us so that we can preach and serve churches and schools; as Isaiah says (chap. 49:23): ‚*Reges nutricii tui*', kings shall nourish you and queens shall suckle you; as they did in former times, almost too abundantly, and where the Gospel has made them pious, still do." (Example of consecrating a true Christian bishop, from the year 1542. XVII, 154 [StL 17, 113])

The same: "If they (the authorities) prevent the churches from censuring and punishing and do not allow or permit the excommunication, as Christ himself instituted and commanded, they thus promote, foster, and contribute to offenses, and will be transformed from servants of God into serfs of the accursed devil in hell." (Explanation of the Prophet Joel. 1545. VI, 2406.)

The pious Duke Albrecht of Prussia himself also expressed this view. In 1530, he wrote: "We are compelled to take on a foreign office, namely that of bishop." (*Real-Encyklop*. XXI, 127.)

In the opinion of the Wittenberg theologians to the imperial estates from 1530, we read: "For the order that bishops are set over priests as superintendents has undoubtedly had many honest causes. For priests must have superintendents. Thus, the secular princes will not wait continue much longer to serve in the role of church government." (*Corpus Ref*. II, 284.)

Far from considering the so-called ecclesial acts of the princes to be princely official acts, they were rather seen as burdens that the princes bore only provisionally and would soon shake off.

How important were the services rendered to the church by the Lutheran princes of the Reformation period! What would have happened if the Elector of Saxony had not prevented Luther from having to follow the Pope's summons to Rome? In any case, he would not have returned to Germany alive. What would have happened if the same Elector had not brought Luther, who was under anathema and imperial ban, to safety at Wartburg Castle? Consider also the efforts of the pious Elector Augustus to bring about the Formula of Concord. At his own expense, he held 15 meetings, to which theologians from foreign countries were also invited. It is reported that this alone cost him nearly a ton of gold. — b. On the other hand, however, we find in God's Word that even a pagan, the governor Gallio, brother of the philosopher Seneca, once recognized that the authorities had neither the right nor the power to usurp the government of the church and to compel people to embrace the true faith, or what they considered to be the true faith. For we read in Acts 18:12-16: "But while Gallio was proconsul in Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal, saying, 'This man is persuading people to serve God contrary to the law. But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, “If it were a matter of crime or wickedness, dear Jews, I would listen to you, but since it is a question of doctrine and words and the law among you, see to it yourselves; I do not intend to be a judge over you.” And he drove them from the judgment seat. The Holy Spirit undoubtedly had this story recorded, among other things, so that people would know in matters of doctrine, the secular authorities as such have no right to pass judgment. The dogmatists of the 17th century deviated here from Scripture and confession in favor of the state churches and call it Gallionism when one denies the secular authorities as such the right to judge right and false doctrine by virtue of their office.

This is taught just as clearly in John 18:36-37. According to this, Christ, the King of Truth, does not have a kingdom of this world and therefore does not want his kingdom to be defended with secular weapons. That is why Christ also says to his disciples James and John, who wanted to call down fire on the Samaritans who did not want to receive Christ: “Do you not know what kind of spirit you are of?” (Luke 9:52-56).

**31** [1885 Western District Convention essay by Walther]

It is therefore contrary to Christ's kingdom and spirit to try to force people to the true faith by external force. God therefore cannot be pleased with a war waged for the spread of religion. Only to protect the persons of the professed followers of a religion against the persecutors of that religion can a religious war be pleasing to God under certain circumstances. God does not want subjects who are subjugated to him with worldly weapons. He is pleased only with those who "willingly sacrifice to him in holy adornment." (Ps. 110:3) God had also ordained religious freedom for the Jews. According to Exodus 12:45, 48, they were not to force anyone to convert to their religion. Nor did they do so when they subjugated their neighboring peoples.

Does our church now give God the glory in this as well? Yes, praise God! In this as well. Far from subjecting matters of religion and the church to the decisive official authority and physical coercive power of the secular authorities, it rather teaches and professes that the secular authorities as such have nothing to do with spiritual and soul matters, that is, with matters of religion and the church.

Thus, for example, we read in the Augsburg Confession: "The secular government deals with many other things besides the Gospel; its power protects not souls, but bodies and property against external violence with the sword and corporal punishment. Therefore, the two governments, the spiritual and the secular, should not be mixed and conflated." (Art. 28, 11-12) Furthermore, in the

Apology of the Augsburg Confession: "This whole doctrine of the difference between the kingdom of Christ and the civil kingdom has been usefully explained in the writings of our people, namely, that the kingdom of Christ is a spiritual one, that is, one in which the knowledge of God, the fear of God and faith, eternal justice and eternal life, but meanwhile, outside of it, allows us to use the lawful civil orders of whatever peoples among whom we live, just as it allows us to use medicine, or architecture, or food, drink, and air." (Müller p. 215, § 54.)

Brenz therefore writes explicitly: "When Christ says, 'Tell it to the congregation' (Matthew 18:17), this is not to be understood as a large assembly or congregation (Acts 19:32), in which the secular authorities are present and, in accordance with their profession, uphold the public honorability of life; Rather, it is to be understood as a small assembly (Matthew 18:17), of which the secular authorities are not members and in which the authorities either have no business or are regarded as private individuals, such as the assembly that followed Christ." (*In scripturas Matth. commentar. 1566. fol. 602*.).

32 [1885 Western District Convention essay by Walther]

When, in 1530 in Augsburg, the papists pressed Melanchthon with the argument that the bishops were also secular princes and that one must therefore obey them for that reason if one did not want to be guilty of the sin of rebellion, Luther replied to the question put to him by Melanchthon on this subject with the following, among other things: "A bishop as bishop has no power to impose any statutes or ceremonies on his church without the consent of the church in clear words or by tacit agreement. Because the church is free and the mistress of the house, and the bishops do not rule over the faith of the church, nor may they burden and harass it against its will. For they are only servants and stewards... The bishop as **prince** can **the church** even less impose anything; for that would mean mixing the two authorities, and then he would truly be an *allotrioepiscopus* or a bishop who meddles in foreign affairs; and if we allowed him to do so, we would be guilty of the same ecclesiastical robbery. Here one must rather give up one's life than allow such godlessness and injustice. I speak of the church as something special from the police. The bishop **as a** prince can impose and command whatever he wants on his **subjects** as subjects, as long as it is pious and right; and the subjects must obey. For they do not obey as a church, but as citizens. For the same person leads a double life. So when Conrad von Tüngen commands his Franconians as Duke of Franconia to fast or do something else that is permitted, he compels those who recognize the duke to obey, but not those who recognize the bishop, namely those who are under the authority of other princes, even though they belong to the Church of Würzburg. Just as Pomeranus compels his servant to obey his house rules, but not the church in Wittenberg. So when the emperor commands everyone to fast, those who are in the church also obey, because the church is under the emperor according to the flesh, but not as a church." (*Answer to the Questions Sent about Human Statutes*. 1530. XVI, 1207 f. [StL 16, 1014 ff.])

We Lutherans also celebrate the so-called National Day of Thanksgiving every year, which our governors and presidents recommend that we celebrate; but we would not do so if they ordered it by virtue of their office.

Now it is declared in Germany to be a characteristic peculiarity of the Lutheran Church that it places the government of the church in the hands of the secular authorities, or rather the respective sovereign. In this connection, reference is often made to the fact that in 1527 Luther persuaded the electors to conduct a church visitation in Saxony. Furthermore, he later worked for the establishment of a consistory, which, in the name and authority of the prince, was to arrange everything in the churches, appoint and dismiss pastors,

decide on emerging heresies, and make all kinds of church laws. Luther thus gave preference to the so-called episcopal system among all forms of church government, according to which the sovereign is also a kind of bishop of the church of his country. Luther thus rejected not only the territorial system, according to which the sovereign has full power over the religion of his subjects, but also the collegial system, according to which the church governs itself.

However, history teaches us otherwise. It was only the great need that moved the warm heart of the elector, on the advice of Luther and other theologians, to take charge of the visitation and later to appoint the consistory. For it was easy to see that if, after the abolition of the government of the papal bishops, no other external connection was created by any supervisory authority for the many isolated individual congregations, which, moreover, often remained in the deepest ignorance together with their preachers, the church would soon have to fragment and crumble, unity in faith would become impossible, and an obvious Babel would arise. However, the Elector did not act in his official capacity, but out of a duty of love as the man best suited to the task. Incidentally, the consistory originally had no jurisdiction at all; it was only an advisory body. Only later did it acquire more and more legislative power, until finally it came to the point where enemies of Christ ruled over the church in the consistory and the church could no longer rid itself of them. That this was completely contrary to Luther's intention and opinion can be seen, among other things, from the preface to the “Instruction for Visitors,” where Luther writes: "Now that the Gospel has mercifully returned to us through the abundant, inexpressible grace of God, or rather, has first dawned upon us, through which we have seen how miserably Christianity is confused, scattered, and torn apart, we would have gladly seen the same rightful episcopal and visitation office restored, as it is most necessary; but since none of us had been called to do so or had received any specific command, and since St. Peter does not want anything to be done in Christendom unless it is certain that it is God's work (1 Pet. 4: 11), none of us dared to undertake it before the others. So we wanted to act according to our conscience and, out of love (which is common and commanded to all Christians), we humbly and diligently petitioned His Serene Highness, the noble Prince and Lord, Lord John, Duke of Saxony, ... as the prince of the land and our certain worldly authority, ordained by God: that His Electoral Grace, out of Christian love (for they are not bound to do so by secular authority) and for God's sake, for the good of the Gospel and for the benefit and salvation of the miserable Christians in His Electoral Grace's lands, graciously

wished to call and appoint certain capable persons to such office. Which His Electoral Grace has graciously done and accomplished through God's good pleasure. . . And although we cannot issue this as a strict commandment, lest we raise new papal decrees, but rather as a history or story, and as a testimony and confession of our faith: we nevertheless hope that all pious, peaceful pastors who take the Gospel seriously and desire to do so will agree with us, as St. Paul teaches in Phil. 2: 2, that we should do, will not despise the diligence of our sovereign and most gracious lord, nor our love and good intentions, with ingratitude and pride, but willingly, without compulsion, submit to such visitation in a loving manner, and live peacefully with us, until God the Holy Spirit brings about something better through them or through us." (Instruction of the Visitors, from the years 1528 and 1538. X, 1905 f. 1909.)

Therefore, Luther fought earnestly against the consistories as soon as he saw that they wanted to become "spiritual authorities." After the Wittenberg consistory was established in 1539 without any jurisdiction, Duke Moritz established consistories with state-church authority in 1543 by decision of the estates. Luther therefore wrote about this on October 22, 1543, to Daniel Greser, superintendent in Dresden: "I can hope for nothing good, dear Daniel, from the kind of investigation that has been undertaken at your court. For if the courts want to govern the church as they please, God will give poor blessings and the latter will be worse than the former; because what does not come from faith is sin; but what happens without vocation happens, without question, without faith and passes away. Accordingly, they may either act as pastors themselves, preach, baptize, visit the sick, administer the Lord's Supper, and take on all priestly duties—or they may cease to mix their calling; rather, they may take care of their court and leave the church to those who are called to it and who will also give account to God for it; for it is not at all tolerable that others should concern themselves with that for which we are to give account. The offices in the church and at court must be distinct, otherwise we burden both. Satan remains the adversary: under the pope, he mixed the church with the secular government; in our time, he wants to mix the secular government with the church. But with God's help, we resist and strive with all our might to keep the professions separate." (XXI, 1325 f.)

The same: "The Pope has brought the oral sword [or spiritual authority] into secular government; thus the Word of God is lost. Now the tide is turning.

For they are turning the office of the fist into a verbal office, and the secular lords want to rule the spiritual government and govern the pulpit and the church, so that I should preach what the prince likes to hear... Now that the law" (the Old Testament) "has been abolished, the iron sword has been handed over to the secular emperors, kings, and princes, but the verbal sword has been given to the apostles and us preachers. So it shall remain; let those who can help themselves do so. For if the princes want to mix these things together, as they are doing now, may God graciously help us that we do not live long, so that we do not see such misfortune; for then everything in the Christian religion must fall to ruins. As happened under the papacy, when the bishops became worldly princes. And if now the worldly lords become popes and bishops, so that they are preached to and told what they like to hear, then the wretched devil will preach at that time; he will preach too." (Excerpt from the 1st and 2nd chapters of John from the year 1537. 1538. VII, 1744 f. [StL 7, 1791 f.; cf. AE 22:227 f.])

Therefore, Luther finally declared: **"We must tear apart the consistory,** for we want, in short, to have neither the lawyers nor the pope" (papal law, *jus canonicum*, according to which the lawyers began to decide in the consistories) "inside. The lawyers do not belong *in ecclesiam*" (in the church) "with their lawsuits." (Table Talk. XXII, 22, 10.)

Even Emperor Constantine the Great, with whom, according to some, the heyday of the Christian Church is said to have begun, while in reality the decline of the Church began with him, declared to the bishops: "You are bishops of the internal affairs of the Church, but I believe that I am appointed by God as bishop of foreign affairs." *Ὑμείς των εισω της εχχλησίας, εγώ δέ των έχτός υπό θεοῦ χαθεσταμενος επίσχοπος αν ειην* (Eusebius, *vita Constant.*. IV, 23–24.)

While the early Lutheran Church, according to the writings of its theologians and its public confessions, adhered to the doctrine that the authorities had neither the right nor the power to seize control of the church, it was precisely Calvin who established and implemented the principle that the secular authorities as such had a duty to govern the church, albeit with the advice of theologians. *)

*) Ranke also writes of Zwingli: "He believed that the congregation was adequately represented in the Grand Council, both ecclesiastically and politically. ... The latter exercises power." (p. German History at the Time of the Reformation. III, 74.

But unfortunately, later Lutheran dogmatists have deviated far from the doctrine of our church in this matter.

Baier writes: "The power and office of the authorities extends to everything on which the welfare of the state depends, and therefore equally to civil and sacred matters, but in different ways.

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... For civil matters are subject to the authority of the government, so that it can impose any laws and establish any institutions it sees fit, provided they do not conflict with natural and divine law. ... But as far as sacred matters are concerned, the doctrines of faith are not subject to the authority of the government; moreover, the government is obliged to observe and practice those acts which God has commanded and which are common to all Christians, but it must leave those which are peculiar to the ministers of the church to them and may not claim them for itself. However, since everything else that belongs to the service of God and serves either to preserve the true religion or to restore it when it has fallen into decline is usually counted among sacred matters, it must be recognized that this belongs in its own way to the authority of the government. ... In particular, as far as the care of religion and worship (*sacrorum curam*) is concerned, it is the responsibility of the authorities to appoint competent church servants, to build and maintain schools and church buildings, to ensure the decent maintenance of church servants, to establish visitations and councils, to enact and enforce ecclesiastical laws (*tueri*), to administer church property, to maintain church discipline, to conduct investigations against heretical and godless church and school ministers as well as against any similar persons, and to compel them to appear in court, to punish those who are accused of heresy or crimes, to abolish manifest heresies and idolatrous worship condemned by the church, and to ensure that the church is cleansed of them, etc." (*Compend. th. pos. P. III. cap. 15. § 4. 5. 6. 8.*) Regarding § 4, a note states as proof that the power of the secular authorities also extends to holy things: “This was known even to the pagans. In the Old Testament, however, the guardianship of the entire law concerning both tablets of the Ten Commandments was entrusted to the princes. See Deut. 17:18-19; Josh. 1:7; 2 Kings 11:12; 2 Chron. 23:11.” — In § 10, the examples of David (1 Chron. 24 and the following chapters) and Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. 19:8 and 20:3) are cited as proof that the authorities have the right to enact ecclesiastical laws. — Furthermore, as proof that the secular authorities must use their power against heretics, it is stated: "See the examples of Solomon, who removed Abiathar from his priesthood, 1 Kings 2:26, 27; King Asa, who drove the harlots out of the land and abolished the uncleanness of idols, 1 Kings 15:12; of Jehoshaphat, who abolished the high places, 2 Chron. 17:6; of Hezekiah, who, after abolishing corruption and abominations, restored the service of the sanctuary

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almost completely, 2 Kings 18:4 and 2 Chron. 29:5 ff.; of Josiah, who did something similar, 2 Kings 23:5 ff. 2 Chron. 34:3 ff."

It is hardly possible to confuse and mix the worldly and ecclesiastical government with the clear testimony of our church in its fundamental confession, as our dear Baier does here. What applies only to the church of the Old Testament, which according to God's will was to be united with the state until Christ came, in order to form a theocracy, is here transferred to the church of the New Testament, and what befell David, Josiah, etc., is readily attributed to all princes and supreme secular authorities, thus establishing an obvious princely papacy (Caesaropapism)! God have mercy on us!

It is equally far from the true Lutheran Church to call upon the help of secular authorities to compel those outside to embrace its faith. Unbelievers seek to justify their rejection of the Christian religion by pointing to the blood (allegedly) shed by the church. And they say with good reason: a church that resorts to such measures for its expansion or preservation cannot possibly be the true church. But we Lutherans can confidently reply: Show us even one case where the truly Lutheran church has incurred such blood guilt or even approved of it! On the contrary, our church teaches that no one should be forced to believe, indeed, that this is not even possible, because external force cannot change the soul. Luther says, for example, in the preface to the Small Catechism: “Although no one can or should be forced to believe, one should nevertheless keep the flock together and drive them so that they know what is right and wrong among those with whom they live, feed, and want to live.” (Preface. *Triglotta* p. 535) Further down, Luther writes: “We should not force anyone to believe or to receive the sacrament, nor should we impose any law, time, or place, but preach in such a way that they urge themselves without our law and (as it were) force us pastors to administer the sacrament.” (*Ibid*. p. 538)

The false church, the Reformed and especially the Catholic church, has stained itself with the blood of those who did not want to accept its faith. One thinks of the so-called Paris Blood Wedding [or “St. Bartholomew's Day massacre”] of 1572, celebrated by the Papists, that most gruesome of all events reported in world history, which the “most holy father” in Rome sanctioned with cannon salutes from the Castel Sant'Angelo, the minting of a jubilee coin, a solemn *Te Deum*, and the proclamation of a jubilee year! Without doubt, it is with reference to this that the princes of the Augsburg Confession wrote a few years later in the

Preface to the Book of Concord: "Wherefore we hereby testify before Almighty God and all Christendom

that it is not our intention or opinion to cause any hardship or persecution to the poor, oppressed Christians through this Christian reconciliation. For as we have a special compassion for them out of Christian love, so we have an abhorrence and heartfelt displeasure at the fury of the persecutors, and we do not want to be complicit in this bloodshed, which will undoubtedly be demanded from the persecutors' hands on the great day of the Lord before the serious and severe judgment seat of God, and for which they will have to give a heavy account." (Preface, p. 12.)

Nicolaus Selnecker, one of the authors of the Formula of Concord, writes in a thoroughly Lutheran spirit: "It is true that in the persecutions that arose in France, the Netherlands, and elsewhere, many innocent people were miserably slaughtered for the sake of religion, and many martyrs were also found among the Sacramentarians, with whom even a heart of stone must sympathize. But, dear God! All of these were not killed because of the doctrine of Holy Communion, but because they did not want to worship the papal abomination, as Lutherans. Therefore, God graciously stood by them in their distress and joyfully and confidently called them to Himself, and covered over their weakness and delusion, in which they were led astray because of their error on Holy Communion, and thus bore with patience, as the pious God always turns to good the faults and shortcomings of his believers that are not defended wilfully, deliberately or stubbornly." (Response to the blasphemy and sacramental libel Danäi. 1581.)

When the Formula of Concord of 1577 was to be introduced, the crypto-Calvinists raised a great outcry, as if a storm of persecution were now about to break out against them. Admittedly, those who had held Lutheran preaching offices under false pretences were now dismissed from their posts, but no further action was taken. No one was physically punished for false teaching. Chancellor Nic. Crell and Funk, who were executed, were convicted of high treason, while others were imprisoned for political crimes.

Jacob Andreae was therefore able to testify at the Herzberg Assembly in 1578: “I can truly say that no man has been forced to sign the Formula of Concord, nor has any been expelled for that reason, as surely as the Son of God redeemed me with his blood; for otherwise I would not share in the blood of Jesus Christ.” (*Der Concordienformel Kern und Stern*. St. Louis, Mo. 1877. I, 72)

The famous historian Johannes von Müller says of Luther: “He may have condemned his opponents, but he did not allow himself to persecute them.” (*Allgem. Geschichte*. Tübingen 1811. Vol. III, 12 f.)

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Luther therefore writes: "Thus, each person is responsible for his own belief and must see to it that he believes correctly. For just as no one else can go to hell or heaven for me, so too no one else can believe or not believe for me, and just as no one else can open or close heaven or hell for me, so too no one else can drive me to belief or unbelief. Because it is up to each person's conscience how he believes or does not believe, and so that no harm comes to the secular authorities, they should also be satisfied and attend to their own business and believe as they can and will, and no one should be forced by violence. For faith is a free work, and no one can be compelled to it. Yes, it is a divine work in the spirit, so be silent, that external power should compel and create it. Hence the common saying, which Augustine also has: 'No one can or should be forced to believe.' To this end, the blind, miserable people do not see how futile and impossible their undertaking is. For no matter how harshly they command and how fiercely they rage, they can never compel people to do more than follow them with their mouths and hands; they cannot compel their hearts, even if they tear themselves apart. For the saying is true: "Thoughts are free." What, then, is it that they want to compel people to believe in their hearts, seeing that it is impossible? Do they drive weak consciences by force to lie, to deny, and to say otherwise than they hold in their hearts, and thus burden themselves with horrible foreign sins? For all the lies and false confessions that such weak consciences make go upon the one who compels them. It would be much easier, even if their subjects were mistaken, to let them err badly than to urge them to lie and say something other than what they have in their hearts; nor is it right to fight evil with evil. ... You say: But Paul said in Romans 13:1, "Let every soul be subject to the powers that be." And Peter says in 1 Peter 2:13, "We ought to be subject to every human institution." Answer: You are right, for these sayings apply to me. St. Paul speaks of the authorities and powers. Now you have heard that no one can have power over the soul except God. So St. Paul cannot speak of obedience, for there can be no power. It follows that he is not speaking of faith, that worldly power should not command faith, but of external goods, to order and govern them on earth. This is also made clear and explicit in his words, since he sets the goal for both authority and obedience and says in Romans 13:7: "Render therefore to all their dues: to whom tribute is due, tribute; to whom customs, customs; to whom fear, fear; to whom honor, honor." Behold, worldly obedience and authority extend only to tribute, customs, honor, and fear externally. ...

Christ himself also distinguished and summarized all this finely when he said in Matthew 22:21: “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's.” If imperial power extended into God's kingdom and power, and were not a separate entity, he would not have distinguished it in this way. For, as has been said, the soul is not under the power of the emperor; he can neither teach nor guide it, neither kill nor give life to it, neither bind nor loose it, neither judge nor condemn it, neither hold nor let it go, which would have to be the case if he had power to command it and lay down laws for it, but he does have such power over the body, property, and honor, for these are under his power. ... If your prince or worldly lord commands you to agree with the pope, to believe this or that, or commands you to do away with your books, you should say: 'It is not fitting for Lucifer to sit beside God; dear lord, I am obliged to obey you with my body and possessions; command me according to your power on earth, and I will follow. But if you command me to believe and to do away with my books, I will not obey, for then you are a tyrant and overstep your bounds, commanding where you have neither right nor power, etc.' If he takes your possessions and punishes such disobedience, you are blessed and should thank God that you are worthy to suffer for the sake of the divine word. Let him rage, the fool, he will find his judge. For I tell you, if you do not contradict him and give him room to take away your faith or your books, you have truly denied God. Let me give you an example: In Meissen, Bavaria, and in the Mark and other places, the tyrants have issued a command that the New Testaments should be handed over to the authorities. Here, their subjects should do as follows: they should not hand over a single leaf, not a single letter, at the risk of losing their salvation. For whoever does so hands Christ over to Herod, for they act as Christ's murderers like Herod. *) [*) Traditors under Diocletian (d. 305) were excommunicated.] Instead, they should suffer if they are told to run through their houses and take by force, whether books or goods. One should not resist wickedness, but suffer it; but one should not approve of it, nor serve it, nor follow it, nor obey it with a foot or a finger. ... But you say again: Yes, worldly power does not compel belief, but only resists outwardly, so that people are not led astray by false teaching; how else could one resist heretics? Answer: That is the task of the bishops; such a duty is entrusted to them, not to the princes. For heresy can never be resisted by force; it requires a different approach, and here there is a different struggle and battle than that fought with the sword. God's word should fight here; if that does not work, then it will remain unresolved by worldly

force, even if it fills the world with blood. Heresy is a spiritual thing that cannot be cut with iron, burned with fire, or drowned with water. But it is God's word alone that does this, as Paul says in 2 Cor. 10:4-5: “Our weapons are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” (On secular authority, to what extent one owes obedience to it. 1523. X, 455 f. 457 f. 458. 459 f. 461 f. [StL 10, 398, 399, 400, 401, 403; cf. AE 45:108-14])

The same: "What are you doing, princes and lords, driving people to God against their will and without their thanks? It is not your office or power to do so. You should drive them to outward piety. Let vows be vows, let commandments be commandments, yet he does not want it, unless it is kept willingly and with pleasure: and should we all become mad and foolish, He will not change His mind because of our driving and coercing. He says, “No one comes to me unless my Father draws him” (John 6:44). Is that not clear enough, dear Lord God? The Father must draw; so a man wants to drive. What God does not presume to do, the poor worm wants to presume to do, and to do it through another unwilling person, which he himself cannot do. If you do not want to be forced to accept our gospel, why do you force us to accept yours?“ (A story of how God helped an honorable convent nun, etc. From the year 1524. XIX, 2097 f. [StL 19, 1677 f.; cf. AE 43:87])

The same: ”You see what [Ulrich von] Hutten is doing. I did not want people to fight for the Gospel with violence and murder. I have written this to people. The world is overcome by the Word, the Church is preserved by the Word, and it will also be rebuilt by the Word. Even the Antichrist, who began without a hand, will also be "wiped out without a hand by the Word. “ (XV, Appendix p. 128.)

Gotthold: ”Question: Can and should the secular authorities force their subjects to accept a religion? Answer: Not at all. For who can impose on me the necessity of either believing what I do not want to believe or not believing what I want to believe? Nothing is so much a matter of the will as religion; for if the spirit of man is opposed to it, it is already abolished, already nothing. Religion is to be defended not by killing, but by dying; not by rage, but by patience; not by wickedness, but by faith, as Lactantius writes. Therefore, Stephen Bathori, King of Poland, used to say that God had reserved three things for himself: to make something out of nothing, to know the future, and to rule over consciences. And Emperor Maximilian declared: There is no tyranny more unbearable than wanting to rule over consciences. However, it is not permissible for those who are subjects to resist by force an authority that forces them to

follow a false religion. Instead, they should either beg their authorities humbly and imploringly to allow them to practice their pure religion, or they should emigrate, following Christ's advice in Matthew 10:23. 10:23, emigrate; or finally, and this is the last resort, they should be prepared, following the example of the holy martyrs, to lay down their lives and shed their blood for the truth of the Gospel. See Matthew 5:10, Proverbs 24:21." (*Manuale casuisticum*. Prefaced by J. Fr. Buddeus. p. 400 f.)

Tertullian wrote in 211: "It is a matter of human rights and natural freedom for everyone to worship what he believes in, and the religion of one person does not harm or benefit another, but it is also against the nature of religion to compel religion. " (*Ad Scap. 2*) *)

*) *"Humani juris et naturalis potestatis est unicuique, quod putaverit, colere, nec alii obest aut prodest alterius religio, sed nec religionis est, cogere religionem.*"

**Thesis VII, 3.**

**The Lutheran Church believes, teaches, and confesses according to God's Word that a. the secular authorities have the right to neutralize and take action against those heretics who establish or follow principles that are dangerous to the state, but that, b. outside of this case, the secular authorities have neither the right nor the power to use coercive force against false beliefs and false worship, or what they consider to be such.**

Christ was accused by the Jews before Pilate not for his alleged blasphemy and new teaching, but as a rebel, as a man who sought the crown of a king of the Jews, Luke 23:2-4. Pilate, however, immediately realized that Christ claimed to be a king of Israel in a completely different sense than the Jews wanted him to believe. In any case, this story teaches that if a teacher incites the people against the authorities with his teaching, the authorities have a right, indeed a duty, to judge him.

2 Peter 2:10 names as the worst heretics those who "despise authority, are violent, self-willed, and do not tremble at the majesty of God." It is obvious that this refers mainly to the Antichrist, as the Apostle Paul clearly prophesies about him

2 Thess. 2:4, “that he sits in the temple of God, as a god, and pretends to be God.” Truly, the secular authorities would therefore have sufficient reason to take action against the Pope as a heretic with principles dangerous to the state; but because they fear him, they bow down before him.

About such heretics who also teach doctrines dangerous to the state, such as a group of Anabaptists in the 16th century, our Confession says: “The Anabaptists are divided among themselves into many groups, some disputing many errors, others few” (*defendunt* = defend); “but in general they teach doctrines that are neither to be tolerated nor suffered in the Church, nor in the political and secular government, nor in the household.” (FC Ep XII 2)

Luther: "Some heretics are rebellious, who publicly teach that one should not suffer any authority; again, that no Christian may hold a position of authority; again, that one should have no property of one's own, but should leave one's wife and children, house and farm, or hold and have all things in common: these are to be punished immediately and without any doubt by the authorities, as those who publicly strive against secular rights and authority, Rom. 13. For they are not only wicked heretics; but as rebels they attack the authorities and their rule and order, just as a thief attacks another's property, a murderer another's body, and an adulterer another's spouse; all of which is intolerable." (Interpretation of Psalm 82, from I. 1530. V, 1055 [StL 5, 718; cf. AE 13:61])

Therefore, it was right that the Jesuits were expelled from Catholic countries in the last century (not for religious reasons, for they were the most loyal papists), and their order was solemnly abolished by Pope Clement XIV in 1773 at the insistence of Catholic powers. In America, this category includes the Mormons, who were expelled from Missouri and Illinois because of their thievery and settled in Utah, but must also expect expulsion there if they do not renounce their immoral practice of polygamy.

With regard to the adherents of [Thomas] Münzer, Luther further wrote: “Where they want to do more than fight with the word; where they also want to break and strike with their fists, there Your Royal Highnesses should intervene, whether it be us or them, and immediately banish them from the country, saying: We are willing to suffer and watch you fight with the word, that the true doctrine may be proven.” (the test shall stand); “but keep your fists still, for that is our (the princes') office; or remove yourselves from the country.” (To the princes of Saxony, on the rebellious spirit. From Aug. 25, 1524. XVI, 20 [StL 16, 14; cf. AE 40:57])

As certain as this is, it is also certain on the other hand that b. the secular authorities have neither the right nor the power, except in this case, to use their coercive power against false beliefs and false worship, or what they consider to be such. “He shall be broken without hand,” it says in Dan. 8:25. Without external force, through the Word alone, the “deception” of the Antichrist should therefore be destroyed. This is also taught in the parable of the weeds among the wheat, where the master forbids his servants to pull up the weeds. (Matthew 13:27-30.)

Regarding this parable, Luther says in the Church Postil: "This parable does not speak of false Christians who are only outwardly living, but of those who are unchristian in their doctrine and faith under the name of Christians, who are beautiful on the outside but harmful.... On the other hand“ (this parable teaches) ”how we should behave toward these heretics and false teachers. We should not exterminate or destroy them. He says publicly here that we should let them grow together. We should act here with God's word alone, for it is so in this matter that whoever errs today may come to his senses tomorrow. Who knows when the Word of God will touch his heart? But if he is burned or otherwise killed, he is prevented from coming to his senses; and if he is thus removed from the Word of God, he must be lost who otherwise might have been saved." That is a powerful reason. Consider what unspeakable damage it would have been to the church if it had burned Augustine when he was still a heretic. Therefore, Luther continues: "Then it happens, as the Lord says here, that the wheat is also uprooted when the weeds are weeded out. That is a terrible thing before God and can never be justified. From this, note what raving people we have been for so long, wanting to force the Turks to believe with the sword, the heretics with fire, the Jews with death, and to eradicate the weeds with our own power; as if we were the people who could rule over hearts and minds and we could make them pious and righteous, which only God's Word can do. But we separate people from the Word with murder, so that it cannot work on them, and thus bring two murders upon ourselves at once, as far as we are concerned, namely that we murder the body temporarily and the soul eternally at the same time, and then say that we have done God a service and want to earn something special in heaven. Therefore, this saying should rightly frighten the heretical masters and murderers of people, if they did not have iron foreheads. But now they burn the true saints and are themselves heretics. What else can this mean but that they pull up the

wheat and pretend to weed out the tares, like senseless people." (*Ev. Kirchenpost*. XI, 693 f.)

In the bull of excommunication sent to Luther by Pope Leo X, he was accused of 41 alleged heresies, the thirty-third of which reads as follows: "To burn heretics is against the will of the Holy Spirit." (See Walch's Works of Luther XV, 1706 [StL 15, 1438])

From this we can see both Luther's position and how the Pope wanted to treat heretics. Luther, on the other hand, published a defense in 1520 entitled "Writing Against the Bull of the Antichrist," in which he writes, among other things:

"His papists excuse their oil-idol thus: The Pope does not argue, nor does he burn anyone, but sits in his holy chair in Rome and prays (perhaps Complines); rather, he commands the worldly sword to wage war and burn. This is the same as what the Jews did when they handed Christ over to Pilate and the heathens to be crucified, but they, like the great saints, did not want to go into Pilate's house, Matthew 27:2, John 18:28, even though St. Stephen calls them Christ-murderers in Acts 7:52 and died for it. So, when I call the Pope the greatest murderer the earth has ever borne, who murders body and soul, I am, praise God, a heretic in the eyes of his Holiness and his papists. (XV, 1855 [StL 15, 1556])

The same: "Authorities should not prevent anyone from teaching and believing what they want, be it the Gospel or lies; it is enough that they prevent the teaching of rebellion and discord." (Exhortation to Peace on the Twelve Articles of the Peasantry in Swabia. 1525. XVI, 64 [StL 16, 50; cf. AE 46:22])

The same: "Now let this be the sum, most gracious lords, that your princely graces should not prevent the ministry of the Word. Let them preach confidently and freely what they can and against whom they will, for, as I have said, 'there must be sects' (1 Cor. 11:19), and the Word of God must go forth and fight; that is why the evangelists are called 'armies' (Ps. 68:12) and Christ is called a king of armies in the prophets. If their spirit is right, it will not fear us and will remain well. If ours is right, it will not fear them or anyone else. Let the spirits clash and meet. If some are led astray, well and good! That is the way of war: where there is strife and battle, some must fall and be wounded; but those who are honest will be crowned." (To the princes of Saxony on the rebellious spirit, *) dated August 21, 1524. XVI, 20 [StL 16, 13 f.; AE 40:57])

*) Against the Münzer gang in Allstadt in Saxony-Weimar.

The same: "But it is not right, and I am truly sorry that such miserable people are so pitifully murdered, burned, and horribly killed; everyone should be allowed to believe what he wants. If he believes wrongly, he has enough punishment in the eternal fire of hell. Why should they be tortured in this life as well, provided that they are only mistaken in their beliefs and do not also rebel or otherwise resist the authorities? Dear God, how quickly it happens that someone goes astray and falls into the devil's snare! They should be resisted and opposed with Scripture and God's word; fire will accomplish little." (Letter on Rebaptism. 1528. XVII, 2644 f.)

Adam Osiander: "The holy and powerful kings David and Solomon did not force the peoples they conquered and subjugated, the Philistines, Ammonites, and Syrians, to adopt their religion, and were satisfied with civil obedience. It is God alone who rules over consciences. Therefore, several religions can be tolerated in one state." (*Colleg. theol. VIII, 34*.)

That is why Luther declares that one should not wage war against the Turks for the sake of religion. He writes: "The emperor is not the head of Christendom, nor the protector of the Gospel or the faith. The Church and the faith must have another protector, for the emperor and kings are commonly the worst enemies of Christianity and the faith, as Psalm 2:2 says and the church everywhere complains. … Even if the emperor were to destroy the unbelievers and non-Christians, he would have to start with the pope, bishops, and clergy, and perhaps not spare us or himself; for there is enough terrible idolatry in his empire that there is no need to fight the Turks for that reason. There are too many Turks, Jews, pagans, and non-Christians among us, both with public false doctrine and with annoying, shameful lives. Let the Turks believe and live as they will, just as one lets the papacy and other false Christians live. The emperor's sword has nothing to do with faith; it belongs to physical, worldly matters, lest God be angry with us if we reverse and confuse his order." (Writings on the War against the Turks. From the year 1529. XX, 2665 [StL 20, 2134; AE 46, 185 f.])

History tells of many bloody atrocities committed by Roman Catholic authorities at the instigation of their spiritual advisors in order to destroy what they considered to be false faith and false worship. Reference has already been made to the Paris Blood Wedding [p. 37], where the blood of the Huguenots was shed in torrents. A second example of deliberate cruelty, also perpetrated by the French government against the Huguenots a hundred years later,

is the infamous Dragonnades. [See this blog post for more details.] During the reign of King Louis XIV of France (1660–1715), there were over a million Reformed Christians, known as Huguenots, in his kingdom. The king's religion consisted of nothing more than strict outward observance of the religious practices prescribed by the Roman Church. The Duchess of Orleans, his sister-in-law, writes: "One cannot be more simple-minded in religion than the king (Louis XIV) was. He believed what the priests said as if it had been spoken by God, for he had never read a word in the Bible and knew nothing except what his confessors told him." Thus, with the help of his confessor, [François de] la Chaise, it was easy for the clergy and the Jesuits to inspire him with the plan to eradicate the Reformed Church in France and thus transform his entire country into a purely papal one. They presented to the king the grace that could be obtained from God through so many sinners brought back to the true, sole church of salvation. They reminded him how he could make amends for his indescribably licentious life. So they began by imposing all kinds of severe oppressions on the Huguenots in order to first make their religion distasteful to them and then persuade them to convert to the Roman Church. They were accused of all kinds of completely unproven offenses in order to be able to sentence them to harsh punishments, declared them unfit for many offices and positions of honor, took away their trade rights, did not allow their children to attend higher schools; reformed teachers were only allowed to teach reading, arithmetic, and writing; there could only be one school and one teacher in each place; they were forbidden from performing any ecclesiastical duties; they were also not allowed to be doctors, lawyers, printers, or booksellers. They were forbidden from emigrating, and to prevent this from happening, guards were stationed in port and border towns. They were also prohibited from having their children educated abroad; if they attempted to do so, their children were taken away from them to be educated in the papist faith. Those who allowed themselves to be converted by the priests did not have to pay their debts to their Reformed creditors, while those who did not want to convert were condemned to pay the debts of those who had become Catholic. The king allocated large sums of money to establish special missionary institutions for the conversion of his heretical subjects. Although all this led to whole crowds converting to the Roman Church, the plan was to either drive the Huguenots to the last man into the Papal Church or to exterminate them. Finally, in 1681, on the advice of the notorious Minister of War Louvois, even harsher measures of force were taken, the infamous so-called Dragonnades, namely, priests and dragoons were sent to all provinces

to complete the alleged work of conversion. When the priest arrived with his dragoons at the house of a Huguenot, he announced to the inhabitants that it was the king's will that all should become Catholic and that those who resisted should be forced to do so by force. If they now declared that they were ready to give their lives for the king, but that they could not accept the Roman Catholic faith against their conscience, then the dragoons moved in; up to a hundred men in some distinguished houses; they occupied all the entrances and shouted with their swords in their fists: "Die or become Catholic!" And now these inhuman beings behaved in the worst, almost indescribable manner, considering and treating not only the goods, but also the women in the house as their property and committing the most unspeakable atrocities without hesitation. This was called, as already mentioned, the Dragonnades, or alleged conversions by dragoons. All Reformed worship was then banned, their schools closed, and their children handed over to Catholic parents for education. Emigration was prohibited on pain of galley slavery and confiscation of property. Reformed preachers who immediately converted to Catholicism received an annual salary that exceeded their previous income by a third; on the other hand, those preachers who did not convert were either executed or ordered to leave the country within fourteen days. The prisons filled with prisoners. Anyone who refused to receive the Catholic so-called last rites on their deathbed lost their property and was sent to the galleys if they recovered; if they died, their property was also confiscated and their bodies handed over to the executioner. Women who sang Protestant hymns and psalms had their hair cut off; old men were dragged to the altars by soldiers amid curses and threats to receive communion under one form; However, those who had renounced their faith out of fear and then returned to the Reformed church, or were even caught making a non-Catholic statement, had to atone for their "blasphemy," as it was called, either in the harshest prisons or on the scaffold. The Jesuits took over the Reformed preacher seminaries and assigned Catholic priests as preachers to the Reformed congregations. Finally, all religious gatherings and the practice of Reformed worship in the castles of the nobility were prohibited on pain of confiscation of their property and persons. From then on, all their children were baptized and raised in the Catholic religion. Every Reformed person who emigrated, and every preacher who did not emigrate within 14 days, was condemned to the galleys. The Edict of Nantes, issued by King Henry IV in 1598, which had previously granted them protection, was now repealed on October 25, 1685. Sixteen hundred

Reformed churches were torn down during this period, thousands of their members were put to work on the galleys, and countless others were tortured, hanged, broken on the wheel, and burned. (See Wernicke's and Becker's *World History*.)

Luther therefore says quite rightly in the Hauspostille: “Truly, if anyone did not otherwise want to fall away from the Pope, he should nevertheless fall away from him for the sake of the blood, so that he may burden himself and his own and God may take hold of him in his judgment and sentence.” (XIII, 462.) Yes, in the papacy the words of Revelation have been fulfilled: “I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus.” (XVII, 6.)

Unfortunately, however, the Reformed not only experienced such persecution from their papist opponents, but also practiced it to a certain extent against the opponents of their faith wherever they had the power to do so. Calvin forced the Council of Geneva in 1553 to burn Servetus, who denied the Trinity. Valentin Gentilis was beheaded in Bern in 1566. Zwingli expressed the principle: “*Qui mergit, mergatur*” (whoever drowns, shall be drowned), and so multitudes of Anabaptists in Switzerland were drowned, including those who were not rebellious, but only adhered to their error.

Even Tholuck, a man who was always more inclined towards the Reformed than the Lutherans, writes: "In Kassel, Lutherans were not allowed to hold public worship services until 1724. The Lutheran nobility scattered throughout the country were only allowed to have communion at home without the presence of strangers. It was not until 1782 that Lutheran worship attained general religious freedom. ... As late as 1678, Count Moritz (of Nassau-Siegen) renewed the ban on Lutherans settling in the Siegen region; in Wied, the children of Lutherans had to be raised in the Reformed faith; circumventing the ban by receiving a Lutheran education abroad was punishable by expulsion from the country (even after the church ordinance of 1708)." (See: *Das kirchliche Leben des 17. Jahrhunderts* [Church Life in the 17th Century]. II, 228. 238.)

Even the Reformed Max Göbel must admit: "The relationship between the Reformed religion and the Lutheran religion was, on the whole, just as hostile and harsh as that with the Catholic religion. However, it was clear that the Reformed, although not in doctrine and in controversial sermons, were far more the persecutors than the persecuted in preventing Lutherans from worshiping and forming congregations, and, just as they suffered many injustices at the hands of the Catholic sovereign and his counselors and theologians, so too did they commit many injustices with the help of their Reformed state government and

embittered the Lutherans who zealously opposed them in word and writing with such violent measures." (History of Christian Life in the Rhineland and Westphalia. II, 62 f. 65.)

In other countries, too, it became apparent that the spirit of persecution animated the Reformed Church. In the 16th century, Lutheran congregations sprang up everywhere in Holland. At that time, the King of Spain was the ruler of the Netherlands, and under his iron scepter the Lutherans had to suffer greatly. But when, over time, Zwingli's doctrine gained the upper hand, the yoke of Spanish rule was shaken off, and the Reformed became masters of the country. Under them, however, the Lutherans fared no better than under Spanish rule. Their Lutheran schools were closed down and they were even forbidden to send their children abroad to receive a Lutheran education. Public worship services were not permitted; worship gatherings in homes were broken up. Finally, the persecuted Lutheran groups gathered in fishing boats on the Zuiderzee and held their worship services there. Many similar examples could be cited.

We Lutherans in America cannot therefore thank God enough that the federal constitution makes it impossible for our authorities to give preference to one religion over another. The Constitution, signed on September 17, 1787, states: "*No religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States*." And in the amendment adopted by the first Congress two years later, it is added: "*Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof*." While in Germany there are fears that the church will disintegrate into sects if it is no longer held together by the coercive power of the authorities, here, to the shame of those fears, religious freedom has proven to be the highest and richest blessing for both the state and the church.

Incidentally, Germany has also had a prophet in recent times who fearlessly testified to the freedom of the church from the coercive power of the state, the blessed Rudelbach, superintendent and consistorial councilor in Glauchau in the Kingdom of Saxony. But his voice was not heard. So when his testimony did not gain acceptance in Germany, he resigned his offices in the state church and returned to his native Denmark. In 1843, 42 years ago, he wrote in the eighteenth of his "49 Theses on Religious Freedom": "It must be shown that the time is ripe for this, that everything in the church and in the state is pushing for it, that without it no blessed cooperation, not even a tolerable human coexistence, is possible anymore. But what is easier to demonstrate?

**51** [1885 Western District Convention essay by Walther]

It is, after all, the loud cry of the birthing times.“ *) Rudelbach therefore calls out to those theologians who work not for but against the proclamation and introduction of religious freedom: “Those who despise the power of the idea that dominates a time have deprived themselves of their historical inheritance.” *) In his last thesis, Rudelbach writes: “The time is ripe for religious freedom, in its pains and struggles on the one hand, and in its waiting and confidence on the other, insofar as it stands on God's Word. May we not lack the wise guiding hand, the sure and clear eye, when we have recognized God's hour from His guidance of the church!” (*Journal for the Entire Lutheran Theology and Church*. Fourth Volume, 1843. Third Quarterly Issue. p. 115 f. 134.)

*) Rudelbach himself had these words highlighted in bold type.

With thanks to God for the freedom enjoyed by the Church in this country, the synod concluded its doctrinal deliberations after also acknowledging the last thesis and its implementation. It was decided to deal with Thesis VIII next year, and the esteemed speaker, Dr. Walther, was asked to serve the synod again.

9 [1886 Western District Convention essay by Walther] ^

[Note: the German "***Hausregiment***" can be translated as domestic rule, household order, domestic order, household government, domestic government, domestic authority, etc. These terms are used interchangeably in the translation below.]

# Doctrinal Proceedings.

Dr. C. F. W. Walther was kind enough again this year to provide theses for discussion and to present them himself. This year's proceedings conclude the topic that has been before the Western District for thirteen years. The aim was to prove that "only through the doctrine of the Lutheran Church is all glory given to God alone, and that therefore the doctrine of this church is the only true one." Last year, from this point of view, the doctrine of "obedience to men in matters of faith and conscience" was discussed, in particular that "the authorities have neither the right nor the power to rule over the faith and conscience of their subjects." This year, it will be demonstrated in detail that this rule also applies to domestic authority. Therefore, the

## Theme:

**The Lutheran Church believes, teaches, and confesses according to God's Word that even the household rule has neither the right nor the power to rule over the faith and conscience of its subordinates.**

The speaker noted the following: If there has ever been a time when the treatment of the topic before us was highly topical, it is undoubtedly the present time. We are now clearly living in the time referred to in 2 Peter 3:3: "First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, walking according to their own lusts." Or have the scoffers who recognize no law other than their own lusts not yet come? Are we not living in a time of licentiousness and upheaval? More and more desperate people are now coming forward who have specifically allied themselves to overthrow all divine and human order in the world with bloody violence and satanic malice, so that even the respectable world trembles and recoils before them. But it is not only that, as far as divine order is concerned, the respectable world itself is in a sorry state, but alas! even many Christians have not remained free from the destructive ideas of these last days, especially with regard to the divine order of the

household order. The household order is, after all, the lowest foundation of all divine world order. If the household order is right, the other orders will also be right. If the household order falls, then necessarily every other order in the world that flows from the household order will also fall. If there is no return to the right leadership and sanctification of the household government, at least in Christianity, we are heading for terrible times.

But who can help here? Of course, only God, the eternal Lord and ruler of the world, the only guide of hearts. But he does not want to do it directly, but indirectly through people, namely through His Church. The Church has the calling to be the salt of the earth and to resist the encroaching moral and religious decay. It is to be the heavenly leaven that permeates everything, the whole world, every social class and world order, including the household, and restores it to what God intended it to be. The Church should be a dam that stands in the way of every stream of corruption and stops and pushes back the wild waters flowing out of hell. Woe to a Church that sighs, complains, and scolds about the ever-increasing corruption, but, despairing of help, idly folds its hands in its lap. The church is and remains responsible above all to God for ensuring that things change. It is true that the church, its preachers, and its members will not make any friends by punishing all pervasive corruption; rather, they will reap enmity, shame, and persecution. But their Lord and Head commands them: “Cry aloud! Do not spare! Lift up your voice like a trumpet, and declare to my people their transgression and to the house of Jacob their sins.” (Isaiah 58:1) Nor should we think that we, a small band, are incapable of swimming against the tide, much less stemming it. Look back, and you will see—to God's glory alone, let it be said—how the Lord has helped our small flock to gain a salutary influence everywhere, including in matters of Christian morals and order. For truth and justice have an irresistible power over people. To this end, God has given the promise that His Word shall not return void. Therefore, let us be confident and very joyful in continuing to proclaim the Word and especially in punishing all ungodly beings that have invaded our country. For a church that is not intent on destroying all the strongholds of the devil in the world does not recognize the great mission it has on earth; indeed, it merely plays at being a church, it does not deserve this name, it is not salt, it is not leaven. Such a church, which does not punish, which, so to speak, lies on its leaven, will ultimately become a laughingstock and a disgrace and will be swallowed up by the ruin of the world itself. The Lord himself says that such “foolish salt” is worth nothing more than

being thrown out and trampled underfoot by people. May the Lord in his mercy preserve our dear synod from such a terrible fate!

Before we move on to the theses themselves, the following preliminary remarks are necessary: There are three estates established by God in which every Christian on earth finds himself, namely the ecclesiastical, the civil, and the domestic estate. Therefore, there are also three governments established by God himself, under which every Christian likewise finds himself in this world, namely the ecclesiastical, the civil, and the domestic government. None of these orders has the right or power to rule over the consciences of men; indeed, no creature in heaven or on earth, let alone in hell, has this power. The rule over consciences is reserved to God, the almighty Creator and Lord of all things. Whoever dares to want to rule over the conscience of any human being makes himself God and sets himself on a high throne, from which God himself will cast him down into the lowest abyss of hell. — In this year's meetings, we will now deal with the domestic government. This authority itself, however, is divided into three different authorities, namely parental, marital, and paternal. Our three theses deal with one of these forms of authority each. However, it only becomes clear that none of them has power over a person's conscience when we first consider what obedience a Christian who is subject to these forms of authority is indeed obliged to render. This is particularly necessary in our country in every respect. [Parental:] Children do not know what they owe their parents; parents do not know what duties they may demand of their children. Of course, they also do not know in which cases children may not obey their parents. The same is true in marriage. [Marital:] The wife does not know what obligations she has toward her husband, and even if she does know, she often does not want to admit it. But she usually does not know when she must not yield to her husband, but obey God alone. [Paternal:] It is well known that domestic servants are usually completely unaware of the sacred duty that rests upon them. They think it is a human institution for earning money; they think that the heart with which one performs one's service is irrelevant. Many even think that it does not matter whether one is faithful or unfaithful in one's daily work, as long as the master does not notice the unfaithfulness. It does not usually occur to servants that they should serve God in their position; rather, they think that it is their own business and that they are free to leave a family at any time, even if this causes the family to suffer. Such people all serve in the name of the devil and carry the curse with them from their masters' house.

Where is the church that sets itself the task of making known the true

divine teaching in these matters? Only the Lutheran Church has the true teaching about these three estates and shows how important they are. The old teachers of our church call the three orders “three hierarchies,” that is, three holy orders. Therefore, let us not be ashamed to deal with these simple catechism matters. It is precisely the nature of the most well-known and general truths that they are least respected, and yet we can never learn them all. Even if we lived for a thousand years, we would still not be finished with them. God's things are inexhaustible; when we enter into them, we find wonders upon wonders everywhere, and our bodies and souls are refreshed by them. If they were then put into practice, the earth would become a paradise. But the deluded children of the world and false Christians do not want to recognize this. They live, as it were, in a spiritual swamp and carry within them the fever of worldly thoughts, unable to get rid of it because they do not want to use the right medicine found in Scripture.

**Thesis I.**

That children 1. are bound according to God's Word not only to love their parents as God's representatives, but also to honor them and be subject and obedient in conscience to them in all things (the fourth commandment, Ex. 20:12, Eph. 6:2-3, Col. 3:20, 1 Kings 2:19; Luke 2:51).

Children should not merely love their parents. We should love all people, even our enemies. But children should also honor their parents according to the word of Scripture in Exodus 20:12: “Honor your father and your mother.” While love for one's neighbor is commanded in other cases, honor is also required toward parents. But what is honor? To honor means to love something with a holy reverence. Honor that is not connected with love is not true honor. If a person humbles himself outwardly before his parents only because it is customary in his circle, he does not give them true honor. Honor must come from the heart; it is something internal. A child must regard his parents as God's representatives to him. He must see a certain majesty in them, for they bear the majesty of God. The father may be pious or godless, but a father is a father. If a child treats his father with contempt, even if only with his expressions, God sees this as if the child had treated Him with contempt. If a powerful emperor sends a representative somewhere, and this representative is insulted, pelted with dung, or at least scolded like a common man, the emperor becomes enraged and sends his

servants to avenge the insulted honor. So it is here. If a son looks at his father with contempt, treats him with contempt, and contradicts him, he is a godless son of Cain and belongs to the race of Hamites. It does not help if such a son treats other people kindly and lovingly: if he is disobedient to his father, God sees this as a sin against Himself. But where have we ended up in our time? How devastated the relationship between fathers and children has become! How often do we find that a son thinks he is doing his old father the greatest honor by giving him a few dollars from his earnings now and then, but in reality he is ashamed of "the old man"! He has attained a certain level of education, and his poor father has spent his last penny to give his son an education; now he can do something thanks to his father's self-denial and the heavy sacrifices he has made, but now the son despises his old father, whom he considers simple-minded, and often does not even consider it worth the effort to speak to him. It is terrible when young people treat their parents this way; God does not look on this with indifference!

While the commandments are not repeated so completely elsewhere in the New Testament, the fourth commandment is quoted in full and transformed in an evangelical sense in Ephesians 6:2-3: "Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with a promise: that it may be well with you, and you may live long on the earth." The apostle gives the promise a New Testament meaning; and it is always fulfilled. All godless boys who despise their parents will not prosper. Even if some who have treated their parents badly become rich and prosperous afterwards, it is God's judgment upon them. For when God is most angry with a person, He gives him everything he wants, feeding him as if he were an animal for slaughter, which is fattened up for the day of slaughter. Otherwise, no blessing rests on such disobedient children and their homes. They fare badly on earth, and God's wrath finally sweeps them away.

We have an example of a good, pious son in Solomon, 1 Kings 2:19: "Bathsheba came in to King Solomon to speak to him about Adonijah. And the king rose and went to meet her, and bowed down to her" (i.e., he bowed down to her to the ground), "and sat down on his throne. And a throne was set for the king's mother, and she sat on his right hand." Let us remember this excellent example and hold it up to our children. Let us tell them how shameful it is when children treat their parents disrespectfully. But let us remember that it is just as shameful when parents tolerate such disrespectful behavior! The children are often less to blame than the parents who do not punish their children. When a son has grown up, learned something, and earned a lot of money,

parents are often afraid to say what they should say, and when he behaves badly and rules in the whole house as if he were the master, his parents do not punish him. Woe to the parents who act in this way! They are like Eli, who met a sudden and terrible death because of his negligence. Therefore, as we speak of the duties of children, let us also think of our parental duties and be certain that the unpunished sins of our children are our own sins! We must do things differently than the Americans; we must not follow what they consider decent. Our standard is not the fashion and customs of our country, but the Bible, and we must strictly follow it in these matters.

Col. 3:20: “Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.” This is a terrible word for the old Adam: “in everything.” But it is God's will that is being expressed here, and who would dare to contradict the Holy Spirit? This is not too much to say. It is clear that the apostle assumes here that the Colossians know well that those things which God has reserved for Himself are excluded.

Luke 2:51: “And he went down with them to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.” Here we are presented with the example of the Savior, and what an example it is! Jesus, the Prince of Life, the Lord of Glory, the only begotten Son of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, the Creator of the world, the Redeemer of sinners, is subject to Joseph the carpenter, who is only his foster father, and to Mary, his mother, a poor, weak woman! He had previously shown them that he was true God, saying, “I must be in my Father's house.” But no sooner had he given this small hint of the glory that belonged to him than he went home with them and obeyed them without protest. What an example to set for our children! Jesus was not ashamed to be subject to his parents in all things: should our children be ashamed to follow his example?

Chemnitz comments on this passage: "That Luke (chapter 2:51) adds, ‘and was subject to them,’ refers to external duties. And note the word ‘subject,’ which expresses the highest humiliation. For it means that external activities are governed by the rule of a higher authority; for it is attributed to slaves, children, women, and subjects who receive orders from their masters and carry them out. ... From this passage, it is therefore certain that the parents often assigned the little boy Jesus a task or a job, which he then obediently carried out. And from this word, the ancients rightly concluded what Jesus did or what activities he was engaged in

before the age of thirty. For he had not yet begun his ministry and had not learned to write (John 7:15). Nor is it to be believed that he spent his life in idle repose. Basil *) [*) Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, died 379] therefore says: "At an early age, subject to his parents, he humbly and obediently submitted himself to some kind of physical labor. For although those people were righteous and pious, they were poor and did not have an abundance of the necessities of life, as evidenced by the manger that served as the birthplace of the exalted child. They were therefore rightly devoted to constant physical labor, seeking thereby to obtain the necessities of life. But Jesus, completely subject and obedient to them, also demonstrated his submission and obedience by taking on work.“ So far Basilius. Justin assures us in his ”Dialogue with Trypho" that Jesus was engaged in making yokes and plows until he was thirty years old, and this opinion is not based on mere assumptions of the ancients. Rather, the Nazarenes (who were undoubtedly well acquainted with the way of life Jesus lived before beginning his ministry) not only call him “a carpenter's son” (Matthew 13:55), but in Mark 6:2 they say, "Where did he get such things and such deeds that are done by his hands? Is he not the carpenter?' It should be noted that they mention his hands. For they are amazed and offended that such miracles, which reveal divine power, are performed by those hands, which they had seen performing a carpenter's work two years earlier.... In addition to describing humiliation and servitude, this story also teaches that Jesus wanted to sanctify children's obedience to their parents, so that through this sublime example of the Son of God's obedience to his mother and his foster father, a carpenter, obedience to parents would become sweeter for other children." (*Harmonia ev. ad Luc. 2, 51*)

Balduin writes: "The father is not obliged to give his children an account of the reasons for his commands, as a man is accustomed to consult with his wife about such matters and is obliged to do so; for she is subject to him by virtue of an agreement; but children are subject to their parents by nature, and therefore they are obliged to obey them in all things, not according to an agreement, but according to the commandment of the Apostle, Col. 3:20: ‘Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is pleasing to the Lord.’" (*Tractatus de casibb. consc. p. 1227*)

Some have thought that when excommunication is imposed on a father, the children are no longer required to obey him. But this is a

great error. Even if the Church has excommunicated a father and cut him off like a rotten limb, this does not change the relationship between him and his children. Even an excommunicated father must be obeyed and honored by his son, even if he does not perform his duties and honor him with the same joy as he would a pious father.

Balduin says about this: "Excommunication does not abolish civil relations, contracts, and commercial transactions with the excommunicated person, just as in the papacy the oaths of subjects and the obedience of children are abolished when the authorities or a father have been excommunicated. But because excommunication affects only the criminal, and not his friends and blood relatives, the subjects owe obedience to the authorities, and the wife to her husband, even though he has been excommunicated, and they may avail themselves of their services whenever necessity requires. For excommunication does not effect a separation of those whom God and nature have united, but only a separation from a particular church in ecclesiastical matters, until true repentance follows." (*Tract. de casibb. consc. p. 1131*)

The following was also noted here: What gives this matter its great importance is God's express word. Luther says: “God's Word sets my parents above all others and clothes them with divine majesty.” Even if parents may be insignificant, unrespected people in the eyes of reason, God's Word stands and remains: “Honor your father and your mother.” It is not human but divine respect that parents have. Just as Baptism is insignificant to reason, just as unenlightened eyes see only foul water in it, while we recognize from God's Word that it is a bath of rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit through Christ's institution and promise, so too does the divine Word surround parents in the fourth commandment with a divine glory that can never be taken from them. Because the authority of parents is divine, they cannot forgive anything of it. If they do so, they sin against God and trample on His majesty. Again, this also illuminates what a glorious service children render to their parents; it is a service to God in the true sense of the word. — This also raises the question of how children should behave when their parents disagree, when the father allows something that the mother wants to forbid, e.g., an engagement on the part of the children. It should be remembered that Scripture says, “The husband is the head of the wife.” Consequently, when parents disagree, children must obey their father.

The nature of humans is different from the nature of angels. Angels were all created at once, probably on the

first days of creation, and none have been created since. As for humans, however, God first created only one, then brought forth a second person from him, and all humans are descended from these two. Even if humans had remained in a state of innocence, they would still have needed the help of other humans, since they are not born as adults. The task of helping them, however, is that of the parents. After the Fall, the need for help for children has become ever greater. Even if a child is born healthy, it would soon wither and perish if it did not have parents to care for and raise it, or other people to take over the parents' duties. After the Fall, however, there is something else to consider: there is nothing but evil in human nature. “The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.” Goodness does not come to the fore because it is not there. Parents now have the great task of resisting and controlling the evil that is in their children and of planting goodness in them; otherwise, only weeds and malice will sprout. Of course, this often looks just like the most beautiful plant. Some children have such a nature that everyone likes them; they are so well-behaved, friendly, and modest that anyone who does not have a spiritually open eye thinks they have very good children. And yet it is all nature, an outer veneer that has been painted over these children. “Folly is bound up in the heart of a child,” says Scripture. Therefore, our thesis goes on to say:

Therefore, children must submit themselves especially to the discipline of their parents. (Eph. 6:4, Gen. 18:19, 1 Tim. 4:6, 2 Tim. 3:15, Prov. 1:8, Deut. 6:6, 7. Proverbs 23:13, 14; 1 Sam. 2:23; 3:12, 13; Proverbs 19:18; Deut. 21:18-21).

Discipline has two meanings: first, instruction, and second, when instruction is fruitless, punishment. God's Word clearly states that it is the duty of children to submit to the discipline of their parents. Eph. 6:4: "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." The first words of this verse do not belong here, but they are of the utmost importance. Parents should not be the cause of their children's anger. Children can become angry through no fault of their parents, but if their parents are to blame, they have committed a great sin. We should not despise the little ones, but hold them in high esteem. Whoever has a child under his hands has, as it were, the eternal life of an immortal soul under his hands, a soul that is redeemed by Christ's blood and destined

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to populate heaven, not hell. Fathers provoke their children to anger when they punish them in carnal passion and treat them unjustly. There are fathers who take out their bad mood on their children, and as ignorant as children are, they still have a conscience and feel quite well that their father is treating them unjustly. Then a certain anger arises in such a child. But it is the second part of the saying that is particularly relevant here. One might think: since it only speaks of the duty of parents, these words cannot be held against the children. But when God imposes on parents the duty to “bring up their children in the discipline and admonition of the Lord,” He thereby indirectly obliges the children to submit to this discipline and admonition. If a father wants to go on a journey and commands his steward in the presence of the children to supervise them in his absence and to punish them if necessary, the father does not need to say a word to the children himself: they hear for themselves that the steward has been given authority. Thus, the apostle's admonition also expresses God's will that children must submit to their parents' discipline, that they must allow themselves to be admonished, instructed, and even chastised when they have sinned.

Genesis 18:19: “I know that he (Abraham) will command his children and his household after him to keep the ways of the Lord, to do what is right and good; so that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what He has promised him.” If the Lord Himself rewards Abraham and answers his prayer because he will urge his children and his household after him to fear God, this indirectly expresses that this is a duty of parents from which they can never escape. A father who thinks he has no time, that he must attend to his business, and that because he leaves home early and comes home late, he must entrust the upbringing of his children to his wife or strangers, is a shameful father. It is the first duty of a father to lead his children to Christ and to plant true fear of God in their hearts, even if it is necessary to use the rod. God will demand an accounting on that day, and who is so foolish as to think he can get away with saying, “I didn't have time”? The upbringing of children takes precedence over everything else. This is not to say that a father who is very busy should not allow other people to help him in the upbringing of his children; in fact, we always do this. We send our children to school so that they may be educated there. That is why the Christian school is such a wonderful blessing that it cannot be expressed in human words. Parents should actually teach their children all good things themselves; but since they have to work and toil for their daily bread, God

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is well satisfied if they do everything possible to entrust their children to good teachers who are known to understand the difficult task of raising children in the discipline and admonition of the Lord. In this country, the situation in this regard is sad. Many Americans say, “I don't want to teach my children any religion; they can wait until they grow up and then decide for themselves which religion they want to adopt.” But that is a truly satanic principle. That is why God gave children parents, so that they might, so to speak, instill the Word of God in their children with their mother's milk and encourage them day by day on the path of godliness. If they do not do so, they are bad parents, more malicious than wolves, who care better for their young than such miserable people care for their children. Since they do not want to do anything for the salvation of their children, they will go to hell for it. Children are a great and precious blessing. But with each additional child, the enormous responsibility also grows. Most people see children only as their toys, delight in them, hug and kiss them, and think that is enough. But they do not think at all that these children are to become citizens of the kingdom of heaven. They have their children baptized because that is the custom in the Lutheran Church, but they never remind their children of what God has given them in Baptism, of the covenant that the Lord has made with them. Nothing of this ever crosses the father's lips, let alone that he would take the little ones on his lap and talk to them about the Savior. No wonder some people cry over their wayward children. They should cry over themselves, because they did not begin in time to plant love for their Lord and Savior in their children's hearts. It is terrible how hard-hearted we have become in recent times, that a person can have a whole bunch of children, and even be proud of his beautiful family, and not think that these children are a gift from God, which He will reclaim and for which He will demand accountability. What are the sun, the moon, and all the stars compared to a child? The sun, moon, and stars will pass away, but the child shall live from eternity to eternity, in the blessed vision of the triune God. Woe to us, therefore, if we do not do everything in our power to bring our children to heaven! However, if someone recognizes his weakness every day and laments that he cannot carry out this important work as he should, he should take comfort. Then all is well with us if we recognize our weakness. But this knowledge should motivate us to perform this important task better and better. Parents must enter into closer spiritual communion with their children; children must realize that their father and mother are truly Christians. The child must recognize that the father cares for him and is concerned for the salvation of his soul. But if

a father passes by his children day after day in silence, not causing them any offense, but also not seeking to influence their young hearts, then he has shamefully neglected his duty. Herein lies the first duty of parents, to care for their children, not only physically, but also spiritually. But who would not have to accuse himself in this matter? Things must change for the better in this regard, and our dear synod must shine like a beacon in these last days. By God's grace, we have already become a great people. If all parents among us do their duty, the world cannot help but be amazed at the discipline that reigns in our homes, and we will thus do good to the world by our example. Woe to a Christian who does the opposite, who is said to be a pious man, who attends church diligently, etc., but who never speaks to his children about God's Word; who is grumpy with them and has his head full of other things!

The church of the New Testament also recognized and practiced this. This is attested to in 1 Timothy 4:6: “You will be a good servant of Jesus Christ, raised in the words of faith and good doctrine, which you have always followed.” We see from 2 Timothy 1:5 who raised Timothy in the words of faith and pure doctrine: “I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it lives in you also,” and chapter 3:15: “Since you have known the Holy Scriptures from childhood, they can instruct you for salvation.” These two passages are the key to the former. Grandmother Lois took little Timothy on her lap, recited proverbs to him, and tried to apply the proverbs to his little heart. This remained in Timothy's heart, and when he later met Paul, the apostle immediately noticed that the young man had a special gift from the Lord. Timothy's mother also expressed this praise, but unfortunately his father did not. This is still usually the case today. If you find a young Christian with good knowledge and a godly life and ask him where he got it from, he usually replies, “From my pious mother.” What his mother said has penetrated deep into his heart, and he has never forgotten it, even when he occasionally strayed from the right path. Then the thought of his mother's teachings startled him and brought him back on track. It is a real shame for men that one so rarely hears that they have made a special impression on their children with their Christianity. There are certainly exceptions, but the rule is that mothers care more about the salvation of their children than fathers do.

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A wonderful passage that belongs here is Deuteronomy 6:6-7: “These words, which I command you today, shall be on your heart. You shall instill them in your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise.” It is not even enough for a father to tell his child what is written; he should also impress it upon him, reminding him how great and serious sin is, how it offends his Savior and drives away the Holy Spirit. It often happens that good Christians in a congregation excuse themselves by saying, “I cannot do that, I do not have the gift.” But that is an empty excuse. If they really do not have the gift, they should ask God to give it to them. They do not have it because they do not ask for it. This gift can be requested, and God will certainly not refuse it to those who ask Him for it.

But even more than that, instruction is not enough; it must also be taken seriously. This is what Scripture says in Proverbs 23:13-14: “Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.” People often say, “This is a free country, so even a father has no right to beat his children.” But it is a terrible blindness to speak this way. The father is responsible for the child, and now he is not allowed to discipline him? The proverb quoted above does not merely mean “discipline with words,” but the text indicates that the rod should also be used. Nor should one think that the rod is superfluous in any case. It must always be at hand. Evil is in the hearts of all people. Those who spare the rod deprive their children of salvation.

Here we have the example of Eli, 1 Sam. 2:23: “And he said unto them, Wherefore do ye such things? for I hear of your wickedness from all people.” Eli also chastised his children with words, but he did not show seriousness. But God did not tolerate his weakness, and Eli had to atone for this sin of omission with his death. This remarkable case concerns us all. Who would still have an unbroken neck if the Lord were to deal with everyone as He did with Eli?

Note also the words of Prov. 19:18: “Chastise your son, for there is hope.” From this we learn that discipline must begin in the cradle. It is unchristian foolishness when parents say that a child is too young and does not understand the blows. As soon as wickedness breaks out, the duty begins to control it with seriousness. There are enough Christian parents who, through no fault of their own, have wayward children. This is a great and terrible cross to bear, and far be it from us to weigh on the conscience of such parents, who have proven their faithfulness. Rather, they should be comforted in their heavy cross and shown

that the great saints of whom Scripture tells us often did not fare better. But experience teaches that in most such cases the parents themselves are to blame. They did not begin discipline early enough. Even small children who are still at their mother's breast often cry not only out of pain, hunger, or thirst, but one can see that they are full of anger and malice. In such cases, the child should not be picked up and calmed with sweet words, but discipline is appropriate. The child understands this well enough. It soon acquires a little understanding, and even small children have a conscience and quickly realize what punishment is all about. This discipline must be continued, and in this way one gets good children. But beware of turning your children into respectable hypocrites. There are parents who believe nothing bad about their children; who consider them good and pious; who become angry when told that their children have lied or committed some other sin; indeed, they often say outright, “My child does not lie,” and the like. But such parents raise nothing but Pharisees and hypocrites. For God's sake, we should make our children poor sinners at an early age. Why is it that so many children turn their backs on the church when their parents die? They may have grown up to the delight of everyone, but they always lived as hypocrites, were always praised, and everything was always interpreted in the best possible light. We must make children poor sinners through the way we raise them; that is the surest way to keep them in Christianity.

Finally, Deuteronomy 21:18-21 belongs here: "If anyone has a stubborn and disobedient son who does not obey his father and mother, and when they discipline him, he will not listen to them, then his father and mother shall take hold of him and bring him to the elders of the city and to the gate of that place, and say to the elders of the city: This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious, and will not obey our voice, and is a glutton and a drunkard. Then all the people of that city shall stone him to death, and you shall put away the evil from among you, that all Israel may hear and fear." In the old covenant, the church was merged with the state. Therefore, if children did not want to obey at home, it ultimately became a civil crime. In God's chosen people, such disobedient people were not to be tolerated, but put to death. But even now, in the New Testament, parents who tolerate their disobedient, wayward children in their homes are committing a grave sin. They should not bring them before the secular authorities; but if they do not comply with the house rules, they should be sent out of the house. As long as the children are young, the church, the congregation, has nothing to do with them. But if such a

disobedient, rebellious child has already reached the age to be admitted to Holy Communion, the congregation is the supreme judge. And if such a child causes offense to the whole congregation through its wickedness, it must be brought before the congregation and excluded from communion if it does not repent. —

On this subject, the following testimonies of Lutheran theologians:

Luther writes: "God has never said to anyone, 'Take the land or kingdom,' except to the Jews. But he has instituted the authority of parents, which is the greatest and best, over their children and servants; this was commanded to our first father Adam in express terms. After that, he commanded it again through Moses (Exodus 20:12): 'Honor your father and mother!' Therefore, this authority is greater than that of all kings and emperors, second only to God. ... This authority is given and established so that children may be raised and taught God's Word, to know, fear, and believe in God, so that a father should actually be a bishop and pastor of his household. For he has the same authority over his children and servants as a bishop has over his people." (*Sermon on Genesis* 1527. III, 285 f. [StL 3, 193 f.])

The same: "Married couples should know that they can do no better work or service for God, for Christianity, for the whole world, for themselves, and for their children than to raise their children well. Pilgrimages to Rome, to Jerusalem, to St. James, building churches, founding masses, or whatever other works may be named, are nothing compared to this one work, that married couples raise their children. For this is the most important road to heaven, and they cannot attain heaven sooner or better than by this work. It is also their own work (i.e., entrusted to them in particular), and if they do not apply themselves to it, it is as wrong as if fire did not burn or water did not wet. So, in turn, hell is not more easily deserved than by one's own children, even if they do not do any harmful work, because they neglect their children, let them curse, swear, teach shameful words and songs, and live according to their will. In addition, some of them provoke them with worldly adornments and encouragement to seek only worldly pleasures, to rise high and become rich, always caring more for the body than for the soul. — There is also no greater harm to Christianity than neglecting children. For if one wants to help Christianity again, one must truly begin with the children, as was done in former times. .. Therefore, it is highly necessary for every married person to care more deeply and diligently for the soul of their child than for the flesh that comes from them, and to regard their child

as nothing other than a precious eternal treasure entrusted to them by God to keep safe from the devil, the world, and the flesh, lest they steal and kill it. For they will be called to account for it in death and on the last day with a sharp reckoning. For where do you think the terrible howling and wailing of those who will cry out (Luke 23:29) will come from: “Blessed are the bodies that have not borne children and the breasts that have not nursed!”? Without doubt, because they did not bring their children back to God, from whom they had received them to keep. O truly, a noble, great, blessed estate, the married estate, if it is kept right. ... Finally, if you want to atone for all your sins and obtain the highest indulgence here and there, die blissfully, and extend your lineage far and wide, then look with all seriousness at the third part: to raise your children well. If you cannot do this, then ask and seek out other people who can, and do not spare any expense, food, effort, or labor. For these are the churches, altars, testaments, vigils, and masses for the dead that you leave behind, which will also shine upon you in death and wherever you go. *Soli Deo Gloria*!" (*Sermon on the married estate*. 1517. X, 761—763 [StL 10, 643-645; AE 44:12 ff.])

The same: "What else is it but sacrificing and burning one's own child to idols, when parents love their children more for the sake of the world than for God? They let them go and, burned by worldly lust, love, joy, goods, and honor, God's love, honor, and eternal good pleasure are extinguished in them. Oh, how dangerous it is to be a father and mother where only flesh and blood reigns! For truly, it is upon this (fourth) commandment that the first three and the last six are recognized and kept, since parents are commanded to teach their children such things, as in Psalm 78:5–6: “He established a testimony in Jacob and gave a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach their children, that the generations to come, even the children yet to be born, when they arise, may also declare it to their children.” This is also the reason why God commands parents to honor, that is, to love with fear; for this love is without fear, and therefore it is more dishonor than honor." (*Sermon on Good Works*. 1520. X, 1644 f. [StL 10, 1360 f.; AE 44:83])

Gerhard: “King David placed his son Solomon under the guidance of Nathan the prophet* (2 Sam. 12:25), that is, he ensured that he was diligently instructed in the true religion by Nathan, his court preacher, and guided to all godliness and virtue.” (*Loc. de magistr. § 151.*)

Luther: "In particular, the authorities and parents should also strive to govern well and send their children to school, pointing out how they are obliged to do so, and if they fail to do so, what a

accursed sin they are committing. For by doing so, they destroy and devastate both God's kingdom and the world, as the worst enemies of both God and man. And mark well what terrible damage they do when they do not help raise children to become pastors, preachers, clerks, etc., that God will punish them terribly for it. For it is necessary to preach here; the parents and authorities are now sinning in this matter beyond words. The devil also has something cruel in mind with this." (*Preface to the Small Catechism*. 19-20)

The same: "But those who do not want to learn this, who deny Christ and are not Christians, should not be allowed to receive the sacrament, should not be baptized, and should not enjoy any Christian freedom, but should be sent back to the pope and his officials, and to the devil himself. In addition, their parents and landlords shall deny them food and drink and inform them that the prince wants to drive such uncivilized people out of the country, etc. For although no one can or should be forced to believe, the crowd should nevertheless be kept in check and driven to know what is right and wrong among those with whom they want to live, eat, and reside. For whoever wants to live in a city should know and observe the city laws that he wants to enjoy, God grant it, whether he believes or is in his heart a rogue or a scoundrel." (*Preface to the Small Catechism*, § 11-13.) This passage is often held up to us as proof that Luther was also in favor of coercion of faith. But here there is no mention of a case in which a religion is to be imposed on someone against their conscience, but rather of unscrupulous, crude, undisciplined, lazy subjects who learn nothing but want to remain in their innate ignorance and crudeness. Carpzov therefore comments on Luther's words: “It is one thing to compel people to believe, and another to ensure external discipline so that brutality and godlessness do not take deeper root.” (*Isag. in libr. symb. p. 946*.)

The following story was also read aloud, which Theodoret *) [*) Bishop of Cyrus in Syria, died 457] recounts in his continuation of Eusebius' church history: "While Julian was causing unrest with his threats, he was defeated by a Beroen. The latter was already famous as the supreme ruler of the Beroen Republic; but he became even more famous for the fervor of his heart for Christ. For when he learned that his son had fallen into the godlessness that was growing ever greater at that time, he cast him out of the house and publicly renounced him. Thereupon, the son met the emperor in the inn nearest to the city, to whom he presented both his opinion and his father's

renunciation. The emperor told him to be calm, for he would reconcile his father with him. And when he came to Berea, he invited the magistrate and the most distinguished citizens to a dinner, among whom was the father of that young man. He had the father sit down on the same couch with his son, and during the meal he said to the father: It does not seem right and fair to me to use force against someone who is inclined to something else and to change his mind to something else that he does not want. Therefore, do not use force against your son, who rejects your dogmas (doctrines of faith). For I do not force you to accept mine, even though I could very well force you to do so.' But the father, conscious of his divine religion, says: “What? Are you talking, O Emperor, about that senseless man who hates God and prefers lies to the truth?” Whereupon the emperor, assuming a gentle expression, says: “Stop scolding!” and, turning his face away from him, says to the young man: “I will take care of you, because I cannot persuade your father to do so.” — I have not recounted this (adds Theodoret) without purpose, but in order to show not only the courage of that admirable man, but also that Julian's power was despised by most people." (*Theodoreti opp. Tom. II. fol. 291. cf. Antores hist. eccles. sive Tripart. 1523. fol. 470 sq*.)

Of the last days, in which we undoubtedly live, the Savior says that it will be as it was in the days of Noah before the Flood, and he uses the words: “They will marry and be given in marriage.” The Lord is undoubtedly referring to Genesis 6, where it is recounted that before the Flood, the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they took wives for themselves. They no longer bound themselves to any law. They had abandoned the promise and therefore despised the commandments. So it is now that even in Germany, where good manners were otherwise more important, and even more so here in America, it is no longer a matter of concern whether parents give their consent to a marriage. This is clear evidence that the fourth commandment has almost been abolished. For what kind of honoring of parents is it when children marry whomever they want, behind their parents' backs, against their will, without perhaps even asking their parents? This is not honoring one's parents, but shamefully despising them, and is a grievous transgression of the fourth commandment. And how much unhappiness this brings upon a family! Many a father looks with pleasure upon his son or daughter and thinks with joy of the time when a dear son-in-law or a faithful daughter-in-law will be brought into his house. But his children choose people whom their father wants nothing to do with, who speak a different language, are of a different nationality, or

are even of bad character, and they form relationships with them behind his back. Family happiness is ruined, and unfortunately the newspapers all too often report such events, which also frequently occur in the highest social classes. Such incidents cause godly parents great heartache, as we see from the example of Rebekah. Her son Esau took two wives from among the daughters of the Hittites. But they behaved in such a way that Rebekah said to Isaac, “If Jacob also does this, what good is life to me?” She had become completely weary of life, for the two wives had caused disruption throughout the entire family. This is especially the case when the godless son also takes a person of a different faith; even if he attends church with his parents for a while, this usually soon ceases. Then he follows his wife and engages in idolatry with her. It is impossible to express how shameful it is when children marry against their parents' will. Unfortunately, there are not only justices of the peace, but also so-called Christian, evangelical, even Lutheran pastors who bless such godless children, while it is the devil who drives them to act against God and His commandments. This shows how low the so-called clergy has sunk. For such preachers, who unite godless children in marriage for money and goods, are undoubtedly shameful belly priests and miserable hirelings, who are not even worthy of crossing the threshold of the church, let alone stepping into the pulpit and at the altar. But they are found everywhere, and souls who want to be pious consider such behavior to be perfectly acceptable. They believe that as soon as children have reached the legal age of majority, they have every right to marry according to their own will, and that pastors therefore have a duty to unite them. This also stems in large part from the false doctrine of authority, which holds that whatever the authorities permit is permissible in general, even for Christians. The main cause, however, is and remains that people no longer fear God and His holy Ten Commandments. Now we should know that, according to God's Word, any engagement entered into by children without the consent of their parents is completely invalid. And even if someone were a widower and already of marriageable age, but still had a father, he must respect him and cannot enter into a new marriage without his father's permission. Therefore, our first thesis further tells us that children, in particular

b. when starting their own family, must obtain their parents' consent when choosing a spouse. (1 Cor. 7:36-38. Deut. 7:3. Gen. 29:21. Judg. 14:12; Ex. 22:17; Gen. 26:34-35; Num. 30:4-6.)

This is based on God's Word. In 1 Cor. 7:36-38 we read: "But if anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his virgin, because she is past the age of marriage, and he cannot control himself, let him do as he wishes; let him marry her. But if anyone is firmly resolved, because he is free and has his own will, and decides in his heart to keep his virgin, he does well. Finally, he who marries does well; but he who does not marry does better." At that time, the persecution of Christians was already underway, and the apostle had undoubtedly seen many cases where those who had recently married denied the gospel of Christ out of love for their wives and children. Therefore, he advises Christians here not to rush into marriage, but to wait until the storm has passed. But he is very careful not to bind consciences in matters that the Word of God neither commands nor forbids. He gives only good, well-intentioned advice here, not a command. But note well: there is no word about what the children should do when marrying, but only what the father should do, which naturally includes the mother. The apostle thus gives the fathers full authority to act. He does not even say that fathers should ask their children about their inclinations, although a fatherly-minded head of the household will certainly do so, even if it is not essential to the matter, but only for the sake of prosperity. The apostle, however, remains strict in his view that a father has the right to marry off his daughter and thus also his son as he himself wishes. This idea has completely disappeared in Christianity, and the result is that all divine orders in the world that are connected with subordination have been overturned and are still being overturned. But that is precisely why we, as an orthodox church, should allow ourselves to be guided by such crystal-clear statements from Holy Scripture, for God's sake. The father has the right to say to his child, “You shall marry this person, that is what I want!” Of course, circumstances may arise in which a father cannot act according to his own will, but he always has the power to do what he wants. Children are his property and not their own masters; they are subject to their parents in all things.

This was not first established in the New Testament. In Deuteronomy 7:3, we read: “You shall not make friends with them (the heathen), you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor take their daughters for your sons.” The children of Israel were not to enter into blood ties with the Gentiles. There is also no mention of the freedom of the children, but only of the freedom of the parents, who can give their daughter to a man and their son to a woman. Therefore, we must be clear: it is not the children who are to marry, but the parents who are to marry off their children. The

children do not have the right to choose a person behind their parents' backs and perhaps even make a secret promise, but they should first discuss it with their parents. Therefore, when a young man asks a father for his daughter's hand, the father should ask whether the suitor already has his own father's consent to the union. Until he can prove this, the girl's father should not even listen to him.

Genesis 29:21: “Jacob said to Laban, ‘Give me my wife now.’” Laban had promised Rachel to Jacob as his wife for seven years of service. Now that the period of service had expired, Jacob did not simply go and take the girl, but came to Laban and demanded her from him. He wanted his wife to be given to him, not to take her himself. Where is that the case today? The world finds such behavior ridiculous, and when it reads that children have shamefully deceived and betrayed their parents in these matters, the world laughs and mocks the poor parents on top of that. It is also noteworthy that Jacob says, “My wife.” He could also have said, “My bride, my fiancée.” But those who are betrothed are married before God. It is not living together that makes a couple married, but the mutual promise with the permission of both parents. Otherwise, fornicators would be bound to each other by their fornication in such a way that the bond could not be broken again.

Judges 14:1-2 contains a most remarkable example: "Samson went down to Timnah and saw a woman in Timnah among the daughters of the Philistines. And when he came up, he said to his father and mother, 'I have seen a woman in Timnah among the daughters of the Philistines; now give me this woman as my wife." Samson was a chosen instrument of the Lord, through whom God wanted to do great things against the bitter enemies of the chosen people of Israel. He sees a woman among the Philistines, and it occurs to him that he must marry her. He himself undoubtedly did not really know why this was so, but God wanted to place him in the midst of the Philistines in this way so that he could drive them into pairs. But Samson did not say a word to the woman or her parents, but went home, first discussed it with his father and mother, and asked them to give him the woman in marriage. If a young man acts like this today, he is ridiculed by the world and by false Christians.

Exodus 22:17: "But if her father refuses to give her to him, he shall weigh out the money that is due to a virgin as a dowry. " According to this passage, the father of a defiled girl had to decide whether or not the defiler should be forgiven for his sin. He could give him the girl as his wife,

but he could also prevent the marriage and demand that the sinner give the girl the usual dowry.

Genesis 26:34-35: “When Esau was forty years old, he took as his wife Judith, the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basmath, the daughter of Elon the Hittite. Both of them caused Isaac and Rebekah great grief.” What is described here still happens frequently today. Who has not heard of Christian fathers, and even more so Christian mothers, wishing for death when their godless sons bring godless daughters-in-law into the house, or their godless daughters bring godless husbands? It is most terrible when the parents are good Lutherans and the children marry Papists, so that the doors of the house are opened to Roman priests.

Num. 30:4–6. : "If a woman makes a vow to the Lord and binds herself while she is still in her father's house and in her maidenhood, and her vow and bond that she makes concerning her soul comes before her father, and he is silent about it, then all her vows and all her bonds that she has bound herself with concerning her soul shall stand. But if her father forbids it on the day he hears of it, then none of the vows or pledges she has made concerning her soul shall stand; and the Lord will be gracious to her because her father forbade it." This is a particularly important passage. If a daughter is still unmarried, she is, according to the Holy Spirit's expression, still “in maidenhood”; she is her father's maid, just as the son is his father's servant. If a girl made a vow to God at that time, it was tantamount to an oath, since she was dealing with God. But if the father noticed that his daughter had made a vow and he did not like it, perhaps because the vow was such that it would render the girl unfit for strenuous necessary work for a certain period of time, and the like, the father could forbid her to keep the vow. This freed the girl before God, and she did not need to fear losing God's grace if she did not fulfill what she had promised. But if even such a vow could be overturned by the father, it is clear and obvious that this is also the case with an arbitrary promise of marriage made by the children. The father can also revoke such a promise, or rather, he can declare it null and void. However, there is also tacit consent (*tacitus consensus*). The father can behave in such a way that everyone can see that he had no objection to his son spending a year and a day with a girl, so that it is obvious that he also has no objection to the two of them getting married. In doing so, he has given his tacit consent without having to say a word. Of course, a father can even less revoke a consent that he has actually given. Once the parents have given their consent,

the matter is out of their hands, for then God has also given His consent. If such an engagement were to be broken, it would first have to be proven that God the Lord also revokes His consent. If this cannot be proven, then one commits the terrible sin of adultery by breaking off such an engagement. Therefore, one should be careful not to give one's consent lightly in this important matter. Even if it later becomes apparent that the future son-in-law or daughter-in-law is a bad person, lazy, careless, an alcoholic, or the like, all complaints are of no avail. It is then just as if a layman, out of hostility toward the ministry, baptizes his children himself. If he has performed the act according to Christ's institution, the child is truly baptized. Likewise, young people are married as soon as they have given their vows with the consent of their parents; it is of no use to regret it later.

The following passages also belong here: Genesis 38:6: "And Judah gave his firstborn son Er a wife named Tamar." 21:21: "His mother took him (Ishmael) a wife from the land of Egypt." 24:3: "Swear to me by the Lord, the God of heaven and earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell."

On this subject, we read the following in the Smalcald Articles: "It is also wrong... that any marriage which is entered into secretly and with deceit, without the parents' prior knowledge and consent, should be valid and binding." (Tr 78) The Lutheran Church has also renounced the abominations of the papacy in this matter. The papists recognize secret betrothals. They say that if a couple of young people have promised to marry each other even without the consent of their parents, no one can dissolve this promise except, at most, the Pope. But they must do so because they allow children to enter a monastery without their parents' consent and, as they say, to betroth themselves to Christ. Only in the case of very young children do they sometimes require the consent of the parents; in other cases, they go so far as to not even allow the closest relatives to visit after the children have entered the monastery.

Tertullian writes: "Nor can children validly and lawfully marry without the consent of their parents." *) (*Ad uxorem. 2, 7.*) [*) "*Nec filii inter se sine consensu parentum ritte et jure nubunt*."] This is the language of the early Christian church. Something can be valid and yet not lawful, such as a Baptism performed by a lay person without necessity. In our case, if a son or daughter marries

without the consent of their parents, it is not only unlawful but also invalid. It is not merely a nice, lovely, pious way to enter into marriage that one first asks one's parents, but it is a matter of necessity; that is, if it does not happen, no marriage comes into being. Sometimes, of course, the state takes the place of the parents and gives permission. Then the marriage is valid, but not lawful.

Balduin writes: "Are children obliged to seek the consent of their parents when entering into marriage? Answer: This question is disputed in various ways, especially in the papacy, where almost all reverence of children for their parents has been abolished by papal church laws... In our church, however, it is taught with great unanimity that the consent of the parents is necessary for the marriage to be valid, *) [*) Not only fine and praiseworthy!] and so much so that the father, if he has just cause, can break off the marriage that has been entered into but not yet consummated, or, if it has been consummated, disinherit the disobedient son; as the church order of this electorate states under the heading “on matrimonial matters” fol. 99. By “parents” we mean not only father and mother, but also grandfather and grandmother, if the father and mother are absent. We will only give here the main proofs, which alone are sufficient to satisfy the conscience:

"1.) God has commanded us to honor our father and mother, which honor requires not only reverence but also obedience from children, so that they ask their parents for advice in such a serious matter as marriage and obey their advice. Therefore, Paul wants children to be obedient to their parents in all things (Col. 3:20), namely in those things that are not contrary to God, as we have heard above.

"2.) There are explicit laws that require parents to take care of the marriage of their children; for example: “that you take their daughters as wives for your sons” (Ex. 34:16); “you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor take their daughters for your sons” (Deut. 7:3); “take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands” (Jer. 29:6); “Advise your daughter, and you will have done a great thing, and give her to a sensible man” (Sir. 7:27); “He who marries his virgin daughter does well” (1 Cor. 7:30).

“3.) The father is permitted to prevent the marriage of his daughter who has been defiled by another, for it is said: ”If the father refuses to give her to him, he (the defiler) shall weigh out gold, as much as a virgin's dowry is worth" (Ex. 22:17). If, according to this, a father can invalidate the marriage of his already defiled

daughter by his objection, how much more can he prevent the engagement while the matter is still intact (*integra*)?

"4.) There is also no shortage of examples of parents who have married off their children. Hagar took a wife for her son Ishmael from the land of Egypt (Genesis 21:21). Abraham sends his servant Eliezer to find a wife for his son (Genesis 24:3). Bethuel betrothed his daughter to Isaac (Gen. 24:51, 57). Isaac sent Jacob to Mesopotamia for the purpose of marriage (Gen. 29:19). Judah gave his firstborn son Er a wife (Gen. 38:7). The same is read of Caleb (Judges 1:12-13), of the judge Ebzan (Judges 12:9), and of Raguel (Tobit 7:14-15). We also have examples of children asking their parents' consent to their marriage. Samson says to his parents: “I have seen a woman in Timnah; now give her to me as my wife” (Judges 14:2). Tamar, David's daughter, leaves the decision about her marriage to her father's discretion (2 Sam. 13:13). An angel advised Tobias to ask his relative Raguel for a wife (Tob. 6:13 ff.).

"5.) A father can invalidate his daughter's vow if he has not approved it with his consent. Num. 30:6: “If her father forbids it on the day he hears of it, no vow or commitment she has made concerning her soul shall be valid, and the Lord will be gracious to her because her father has forbidden it.” *) [*) Wilisch's “Parallel Bible” makes the undoubtedly correct observation on this passage: "Although only daughters, as the weakest instruments (1 Pet. 3:7), are mentioned here, sons are also undoubtedly included, as they might otherwise be considered to have more understanding and caution in avoiding rash vows. But since both a son and a daughter can err in this matter, and both are subject to the fourth commandment, and both the son and the daughter are under the authority and power of their father, a father is authorized to judge both his son's vow and his daughter's. But if it is not entirely within the power and authority of children and their discretion to make a vow, then it is even less appropriate for them to enter into a marriage vow for the rest of their lives without their parents' knowledge and consent."] Thus, a father can also overturn a marriage promise that has not been approved by his consent, which is why consent is necessary for entering into marriage.

"6.) Even reasonable pagans agree with this truth, from whom Ambrose quotes a line from Euripides' Andromache, where Hermione, the daughter of Helen, says to Orestes, who was courting her: 'My father will take care of my marriage, for that is not my concern.

“7.) Civil laws also agree. ...

”8.) The laws of papal jurisdiction also concur with this. ... We consider it unnecessary to provide further evidence. The necessity

of parental consent in the marriage of children has been sufficiently proven by what has been said; whereby what has been said of the father must also be assumed of the mother, whatever the lawyers may object here regarding the weakness of the sex and the power of affections in mothers. For divine law teaches that the mother is to be honored just as the father (Exodus 20:12), which is why Scripture always mentions the father and mother together when dealing with the honor of parents (Deuteronomy 27:6, Proverbs 19:26, 20:20, Ephesians 6:2). Children certainly belong equally to their mother and father; indeed, they have caused their mother the most trouble in childbirth, in nursing, and in raising them, as the old Tobias impresses upon his son with the words: “Honor your mother all your life; remember what she endured for you when she carried you under her heart” (Tob. 4:3, 4). Why, then, should children not honor their mothers by asking their advice when entering into a marital union that will take them into a foreign family? And who would dare to snatch children, who are the special property of their mothers, from them against their will?

"Therefore, we read in Scripture examples of mothers who either married off their children or were asked for advice in doing so, such as Hagar, of whom it is said, ‘And his (Ishmael's) mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt’ (Gen. 21:21). Rebekah consults with her husband about Jacob's marriage when it says, ‘And Rebekah said to Isaac, “I am weary of living before the daughters of Heth. If Jacob takes a wife from among the daughters of Heth, who are like the daughters of this land, what good will my life be to me?”’ (Genesis 27:46). Samson is another example, who revealed his intention to marry the daughter of a Philistine to both his mother and his father (Judges 14:2), etc. In Euripides' *Iphigenia*, Clytemnestra says: “Should I not be allowed to marry off the children I have borne?”

However, in some passages of Scripture, only the father is mentioned in this matter, e.g., Exodus 22:17: “But if the father refuses to give her to him (the seducer)”; furthermore, Numbers 30:6: ‘But if her father forbids it on the day he hears of it, no vow or promise shall be binding’; this does not exclude the consent of the mother, but only requires the consent of the father in particular. For if the father does not agree with the mother on the marriage of their children, the consent of the father will undoubtedly take precedence, because the man is the master of the woman, but the woman is under the man." (*Tract. de casib. consc.* 1628. p. 1230—1235)

Seb. Schmidt writes on Genesis 26:34-35: "It is obvious that neither Isaac nor Rebekah were pleased with Esau's marriages, and that Esau therefore entered into them without their consent,

whereupon these marriages only became valid through the forbearance and tolerance of the parents. Hence the popes want to prove in vain from this that secret marriages are permissible or valid.“ (*Super Mosis Lib. I. Genes. 1. c.*)

The Parallel Bible by Wilisch writes on Genesis 24:37: ”My lord took an oath from me and said: You shall not take a wife for my son from among the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell.“ The following: ”Children should therefore not marry against their parents' will and take whomever they want as wives or husbands; for this is counted among the sins of men before the Flood. Genesis 6:2." (*I. fol. 130.*)

Luther also writes on the passage Genesis 6:2 (“And the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose”) as follows: “Moses blames them” (the people before the Flood) “solely for this as their fault, that they cast aside the law of their fathers and did not keep a certain order of marriage, but followed their lust badly and took those they loved by force, against their parents' will.” (W[1] I, 762 [sic I, 672; StL 1, 445; AE 2, 10]) — [The history of the Jesuit order:]

When Luther, almost 350 years ago, had placed the bright light of the Gospel back on the candlestick, so that it now shone again on all Christendom, he had at the same time inflicted a mortal wound on the papacy. The throne of the Pope wavered and faltered in all the lands of Christendom. Then the devil awakened a fanatical spirit in Spain, an officer named Ignatius of Loyola. He founded a new order whose members were not only to take the three vows of monks, namely to be obedient to their superiors, to remain unmarried, and to have no personal property, but he added to these vows that they should obey the pope unconditionally. And if he were to send them to the ends of the earth without giving them a penny for travel expenses, they would be bound to go. The then Pope Paul III soon realized that this was a valuable bodyguard for him, and therefore confirmed this order in 1540, which had set itself the goal of reestablishing the faltering papacy, healing the wounds that Luther had inflicted on it, to reestablish the Pope's rule throughout Christendom, and above all to gain control over the consciences of all people. They wanted to bring it to the point where they and the priests devoted to them would actually be the conscience of the people. People were not to follow the conscience they had received at birth, but were to know that, whatever their conscience might say, they had to do what their Jesuit confessor demanded. It is clear that the most godless society that has ever existed is that of the so-called

"Jesuit Order," whose ultimate goal is to gain control over the consciences of all people. In this, the Jesuits went so far as to conspire against the Pope whenever he thwarted their plans for political reasons. In 1773, Pope Clement XIV abolished the Jesuit Order because all Catholic political powers had demanded it. It was recognized that this was the most dangerous order to the state that existed. Everywhere they instigated conspiracies, even against governments. They actually wanted to be the ones who told kings and emperors how they should act. It is therefore not love for the pope or the papacy, but love of power that drives this nefarious society. It is true that it is the nature of all secular and spiritual tyrants to demand that their subordinates act against their conscience on their orders. But to teach openly and directly that they have the power and right to rule over the faith and conscience of men, that is, to command men to believe what they consider to be error and to do what they consider to be sin, is something that few in the world dare to undertake. How shamefully the Russian emperor is now [in 1886] acting against the poor Lutherans! He torments the consciences of their poor pastors to the utmost, forbidding them to do what they swore before God when they took office, and commanding them to do what is contrary to their oath of office. But nevertheless, neither the emperor nor the popes subordinate to him dare to say that they have the power and right to rule over faith and conscience. Few in the world dare to say this, but among these few is above all the Jesuit Order. This order has given itself a constitution in which it states: "It has seemed good to us in the Lord that no stipulations, declarations, or rules of life can entail the obligation to commit a mortal sin or a venial sin, unless the superior commands it in the name of Jesus Christ or by virtue of obedience!" A member of this order must therefore also commit a mortal sin if the superior commands him to do so in the name of Jesus Christ and by virtue of the obedience that the Jesuit has sworn to perform. This constitution remained hidden for a long time; the Jesuits kept it only among themselves and no one else got their hands on it. But when Clement XIV abolished the order in 1773, all their monasteries were quickly sealed. They themselves were expelled, and now, of course, the constitution in its true wording also came into the hands of the laity. The register of the Prague edition summarizes the quoted words as follows: "The superiors can make it binding to sin in the name of obedience if this benefits many." They have the diabolical principle that if one has a good purpose, one can use any means. They go so far as to say that if one has a good purpose in mind,

one can even kill one's own father. If the son sees that his father is squandering the family fortune, he can, according to the Jesuit principle, kill his father if he has the good purpose of managing the fortune better. In short, no means are too bad: the Jesuits approve of them if they are used for a good purpose. There is not one of the Ten Commandments from which they do not dispense according to their wicked principle.

But the Jesuits not only have this appalling principle, they have also acted according to it time and again. Whenever a superior commands any Jesuit to commit a sin, that is, to do something against his conscience, even if it is the most appalling thing imaginable, regicide, treason, poisoning wells, and the like, the subordinate, who has sworn unconditional obedience, is obliged to carry out the orders. One may be tempted to think that this is an exaggerated portrayal of Jesuitism, but it is really nothing but the pure truth. The Jesuits also undoubtedly killed Pope Clement XIV with a terrible poison that took effect over a long period of time. The Pope himself said, when he signed the bull of suppression: “I am signing my death warrant.” No sooner had the bull been issued than he fell ill and died a miserable death. After his death, his entire body turned black, his head fell off his torso, and the capsule in which his heart had been enclosed burst because the fluids began to ferment violently. That is how terrible the poison was. There were Jesuits who wrote entire books on the preparation of poisons. They had a poison of which only a small speck was sprinkled on a letter; when the reader inhaled it, he had to die. Pius VII reestablished this shameful order in 1814, even though Clement XIV had said that it would be abolished forever. The current pope has solemnly reconfirmed it once again. Before he became pope, he was not a bad man; but since then, it seems as if the devil himself has entered him. He was previously a bitter enemy of the Jesuits; now, as pope, he has become their best friend. —

Since, according to God's Word, we do not grant any human being power over the conscience of another human being, we say, despite the great power given to parents over their children,

2. that parents have neither the right nor the power to rule over the faith and conscience of their children (Eph. 6:1, Matt. 10:34-37; Deut. 33:9; Luke 2:48-49; John 2:3-4; 1 Sam. 20:30-34; Gen. 24:58; Num. 30:5).

No father or mother can command anything that is against a child's conscience. If they did so, the disobedience

on the part of the children would be divine obedience. One can disobey a police officer without despising the authorities if the police commissioner is standing next to him and prevents the arrest. The one who stands above the police officer has the greater power. The Most High is God in heaven; what He says must be done. When creatures presume to give commands against God's will, these commands have no validity, whatever they may be, even if an angel or archangel were to bring them. God has reserved for himself the right to rule over consciences. For conscience is the voice of God within every human being, accusing and condemning him when he says with his mouth that he believes something he considers false in his heart, or when he does or wants to do something he considers sinful. We experience this every day and every hour. If we consider something to be wrong, but say “I believe it” out of fear, the voice within us says: “That is shameful and wrong, you are a liar and a hypocrite.” Or if someone wants to commit an act that they know is a sin, the voice of conscience immediately speaks up and says: “That is sin, you must not do it.” And if someone has committed a sin out of rashness, conscience does not remain silent, but says: “That was sin, you must ask God for forgiveness, or you cannot stand in His grace.” It is a great mercy of God that He left us our conscience after the Fall. Romans 14:20 says, “All things indeed are clean, but it is not good for the man to eat anything that causes his brother to stumble.” Paul means to say: Everything that God has caused to grow, man may eat and not sin; but if he eats or drinks it while he considers it to be sin in his conscience due to a lack of knowledge, then it also becomes sin for him, even though it would otherwise be a free thing, indeed, something extraordinarily good that he has done. God wants us to be guided by this inner divine judge. In everything we do, we must have a good conscience, or we are miserable people. If, therefore, children had to do something they considered wrong and unjust because their parents commanded it, the parents would have the power to lead their children to hell. That is a terrifying thought! Parents could then say: “Do this, for which you will be damned!” Then parental authority would indeed be a terrible power, not for good, but for evil, not for heaven, but for hell, not for salvation, but for damnation. But God has not given this power to parents, and if they presume to exercise it, they make themselves gods. Because God has power over the conscience, it remains silent as soon as the Lord speaks. A Christian often has serious doubts about whether something is right or wrong. They will not be reassured by simply being told, “Just do it, it is not

wrong," but will only be certain and satisfied when they know what God has written in His Word. Those children who obey their parents against their conscience will be lost with their parents.

Eph. 6:1: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord." The addition of "in the Lord" forms a powerful barrier to the power of parents. If we cannot do something in the Lord, that is, in the certainty that it pleases the Lord, we must rather tell ourselves that it is against the express will of the Lord, and we must not do it.

Matthew 10:34-37: "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be the members of his own household." Everyone will immediately say to themselves: These words cannot mean that the Savior desires strife and quarreling, hatred, enmity, and persecution. Rather, he has come to put an end to all strife. This is what the holy angels meant at Christ's birth when they sang: "Peace on earth." Rather, he means to say with these words: I have come to proclaim a teaching that most people will not accept, but will reject. They will be enraged by this teaching and will want nothing to do with it. When others accept my teaching, those people will become its enemies. — These words of Christ prove true at all times. When a father converts, his godless son becomes a leper to him. If the son converts, he returns to his father's house a completely different person, grieves over the sin he sees there, and punishes wrongdoing, even if in a loving manner, the others become his enemies. Wherever a righteous preacher goes, no matter how peaceful the conditions may have been before, when he begins to preach the word of conversion, that man must change and be born again if he wants to be saved, that one must pray fervently and lead a Christian life, and avoid the world and its pleasures, the living, powerful word of God will strike everywhere like lightning. Some will accept it with joy, be converted by God's power, and begin a new life. Others, however, remain in their wickedness and become bitter enemies of the word and of those who profess it. Then strife and contention arise where false peace had previously reigned, strife and contention even in the midst of families. This is what Christ's words mean. That is why the Savior even rejoices when this war begins, not over the war itself—for he wants all people to accept His Word

with faith—but over the fact that it reveals that the living word of God has entered a community and caught a number of fish in the net of the gospel. They have been converted and become different people. This also applies to Luke 12:49: “I have come to set the earth on fire; how I wish it were already ablaze!” Where the living Word is preached and the preacher also testifies to what he preaches in his life, it is impossible for the Word not to have an effect; it does not return empty, it makes Christians and pious people who work with fear and trembling to be saved. But then a fire of discord arises among people. Luther rightly explains the words, “What would I rather have, for it was already burning,” as a parallel to Matthew 10:34, 37. The devil does not depart because of polite words; he must be fought against. We are not only fighting against the devil, but also against the people through whom he works. There are many good Christians who think that we fight and argue too much in our periodicals and sermons, which only causes strife and discord where there was previously harmony and peace. But there is no other way. The devil must be cast out, or the kingdom of God cannot come. This is not to say that preachers are right to start polemicizing against sects, Methodists, Baptists, etc., in young, less knowledgeable congregations. A preacher must first lay the foundation of truth, and then, when the congregation is established, he can begin to gradually expose the false teachings of the sects and warn against them. Most preachers in our synod are certainly cautious in this regard. But sometimes there is no other option than for the preacher to warn of the danger that is clearly looming. He is responsible for the sheep that are snatched away from the shepherd by wolves.

A wonderful passage is Deuteronomy 33:9: “Whoever says to his father and mother, ‘I have not seen him’; and to his brother, ‘I do not know him’; and to his son, ‘I do not know him’; they will keep your word and observe your covenant.” When a Christian recognizes the truth that leads to salvation, he also speaks it out, whether people like it or not. Then no consideration for father or mother may hold him back. He must confess the truth and stand as if there were no father, no mother, no brother, no sister in the world. These connections do not belong to the kingdom of God, but to the kingdom of the world. He must confess the truth, come what may.

Luke 2:49: "Why did you seek me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" When Christ's parents wanted to punish him for staying in the temple, He did not suffer this punishment, but rejected it. So every child must speak to his father

or mother when they want to punish him for acting according to God's commandment, for that takes precedence over every commandment of father and mother.

John 2:4: “Woman, what have I to do with you? My hour has not yet come!” Since the Lord is fulfilling his office as Messiah, He does not allow His mother to dictate to him. This is a remarkable statement from the Savior, who was otherwise so kind and respectful toward his mother. Since she wants to interfere with His office, His kindness ceases. — Mark 3:32-35 also belongs here: "They said to him, 'Behold, your mother and your brothers are standing outside, asking for you. And He answered them, 'Who is my mother, and who are my brothers? And He looked around at his disciples sitting in a circle around Him and said, 'Behold, my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.“ In God's kingdom, father and mother do not count, but only God and His Holy Word.

1 Sam. 20:30-34: ”Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said to him, You disobedient villain, I know well that you have chosen the son of Jesse to your shame and to the shame of your wicked mother. For as long as the son of Jesse lives on earth, you and your kingdom will not stand. Send and bring him to me, for he must die. Jonathan answered his father Saul and said to him, "Why should he die? What has he done?" Then Saul shot his spear at him to kill him. Jonathan realized that his father was determined to kill David, and he rose from the table in fierce anger and ate no bread on the second day of the new moon, for he was distressed because his father had condemned David. This is an excellent example. Jonathan did not obey his father when he wanted to kill the innocent David, even though Saul argued that Jonathan would have no prospect of the kingdom if David lived. Jonathan willingly stepped aside and did not allow himself to become an instrument of David's destruction.

1 Kings 2:20 ff. tells us that Solomon, who otherwise treated his mother with the greatest reverence (see No. 1), did not comply with her wish when she wanted David's wife Abishag for her son Adonijah. Since she was asking for something so ungodly, she had to leave without having achieved her goal.

Genesis 24:58: “They called to Rebekah and said to her, ‘Will you go with this man? She replied, 'Yes, I will go with him.’” Parents do not have absolute power to marry their children against their will. They must also ask their children what they want. The bride and groom should give their consent freely. A forced promise is worthless; it is a word of the mouth and not of the heart.

The following testimonies from Lutheran theologians also support this view.

Balduin says: "How far does the obedience of children to their parents extend? Answer: The commandment of the Apostle Paul is a general one: ‘Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is pleasing to the Lord’ (Col. 3:20); but this general statement must be taken with a qualification, as Eph. 6:1 explains: ‘Children, obey your parents in the Lord,’ that is, in those things that are pleasing to the Lord, because there are many things in which children cannot obey their parents. Such things are: 1.) everything that is clearly against God and the law of nature, e.g., when parents command them to serve idols, to steal, or to murder others. In such cases, children are right to refuse obedience to their parents, because one must obey God more than men. Therefore, Christ commands that parents be set aside when they demand something from their children that is contrary to God; for it means “hating father and mother” (Luke 14:26) when someone disregards what parents impose contrary to God's commandment. For when parents once led their children into idolatry and self-chosen worship, the Lord called them back and said (Ezek. 20:18-19): ‘You shall not live according to the commandments of your fathers, nor keep their statutes, nor defile yourselves with their idols. For I am the Lord your God; you shall live according to my commandments, and you shall keep my statutes and do them.’… 2.) Children are also not always bound in matters that are by their nature matters of means, e.g., in the choice of a wife, in the choice of this or that vocation, in the acceptance of offices and honors, and in similar matters, in which many obstacles may arise that prevent the son from obeying his father unconditionally. In these matters, however, nothing should be done passionately; rather, everything must be done with due modesty, so that the father's mind is won over more by thorough evidence than by the son's mere refusal." *(Tract. de cas. consc. 1628., p. 1228. sqq.*)

Dannhauer writes: “A son is not obliged to obey his father if the father wants to force him into monastic life. A son is not obliged to follow his father if the father wants to lead him to a drinking party on Sunday, neglecting the sermon.” (*Theol. casual., p.* 387.)

Luther: “Where parents are so foolish and raise their children worldly, the children should not obey them in any way. For God is to be held in higher esteem than parents in the first three commandments. But I call it worldly to raise children in such a way that they seek nothing more than pleasure, honor, and wealth, or the power of this world.” (Sermon on Good Works. 1520. X, 1645 [StL 10, 1361; AE 44:83 f.])

43 [1886 Western District Convention essay by Walther]

The same: "Christ departs from the obedience of his parents, remains in Jerusalem, and therefore wants to be unpunished by his parents. … And this example of the child Jesus, our dear Lord, is intended to remind us of our ignorance and great blindness, which always tends to serve man rather than God. Therefore, when it comes to the point where we must disobey either God or our parents and superiors, we should learn to say with Christ: 'I must be in that which is my Father's in heaven.' Outside of this case, I will gladly and wholeheartedly obey my father and mother, emperor, king, masters, and women in the house; but here in this case, it means: Dear father, dear mother, I have another Father, and I should look to Him more than to you. Mary and Joseph had forgotten this, so He had to remind them of it and teach them here." (*Church Postil*. W[1] XI, 358)

The same remarks on Christ's words, "Woman, what have I to do with you?" as follows: "Notice here how harsh he is even to his own mother, in that he not only teaches us the above-mentioned example of faith, but also confirms that in God's affairs and service we should know neither father nor mother; as Moses says in Deuteronomy 33:9: 'Whoever says to his father and mother, "I do not know them," he keeps your statutes, Israel.' For although there is no greater authority on earth than the authority of father and mother, it is nevertheless null and void when it comes to God's Word and work; for in divine matters, neither father nor mother, let alone bishop or any other human being, but God's Word alone shall teach and guide. And if your father and mother tell you to do something, teach you something, or even ask you to do something against God and worship that is not clearly commanded and ordered by God, you shall say to them: '*Quid mihi et tibi?*' What have I and you to do with each other? Just as Christ did not want to do the work of God here, since his own mother wanted him to." (Sermon on the Gospel on the 2nd Sunday after Epiphany, p. *Church Postil*. W[1] XI, 646 f.)

Brochmand writes: "Can parents always prevent the marriages of their children? I deny this with the fullest right. For 1.) it is not given to all to live chastely outside of marriage. Therefore, it is right that parents observe this passage of Paul (1 Cor. 7:2): 'Because of fornication, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.' 2.) It is an explicit admonition of the Spirit of God that parents should ensure an honest marriage for their children in good time. … 3.) Parental authority is not given to parents by God to harm their children, but for their benefit. 4.) Parents who prevent their children from marrying out of pure malice, since they lack natural parental love,

lose the right of parental authority through this complete lack of all parental love." (*Syst. univ. theol. P. II. fol. 571*)

The same: "Question: Can parents force their children to marry persons whom they have chosen and deemed suitable for them, if the children do not consider them suitable? Answer: We deny this. For 1.) A lawful marriage requires the free consent of the contracting parties. 2.) Parents must not provoke their children to anger, according to Eph. 6:4 and Col. 3:21. 3.) The examples described in Holy Scripture testify that the consent of the children is necessary for a lawful marriage, as can be read in Gen. 24:54: "And they called Rebekah and said to her, Will you go with this man? She answered, Yes, I will go with him; and in other places.“ (*Ibid. Tom. II. fol. 572*.)

Ph. J. Spener wrote to a merchant's servant who wanted to devote himself to theological studies: ”It should also be considered that the opposition of friends stands in the way. But ... even if it were your parents, it would not be within their power to simply thwart such a Christian intention, which aims to further the glory of God, but they would have to give important reasons that would convince your son's conscience." (*Theol. Bedenk*. I, 431.)

Luther writes on 1 Cor. 7: 13-14: "St. Paul means to say: If a Christian spouse had grown children with a non-Christian spouse (as often happened in those days), and the children did not yet want to be baptized or become Christians (since no one should be forced to believe, but should be willingly drawn to God through the Gospel), then the mother or father should not abandon the children, nor withdraw or deny them their maternal or paternal duties, as if they were sinning and defiling themselves by their unbelieving children; but they should care for them physically and provide for them, just as if they were the most holy Christians. ... So it should be now and always: Where children do not want to accept the Gospel, they should not be abandoned or rejected, but cared for and provided for, just as if they were the very best Christians, and their faith should be commended to God, provided that they are otherwise obedient and pious in other matters concerning outward behavior. For parents should and can resist and punish outward evil behavior and deeds; but no one can resist and punish unbelief and inner evil nature except God alone.“ (From the year 1523. VIII, 1113 f. [StL 8, 1061 f.; AE 28:35f.])

Christian Chemnitz writes: ”In the one who once wants to fruitfully preside over the church of God, a prerequisite is 1) a pious and, as it were, natural inclination toward it. For here parents, relatives, or guardians do not always act wisely when they force their sons, or

relatives, or wards to study theology, to which they are not naturally inclined. For although it is good to dedicate one's sons to the Lord, following the example of Hannah in 1 Sam. 1:11, it is nevertheless in accordance with Christian wisdom, which is sincere piety, to add: if it pleases God and God grants him a pious inclination and his gifts for this study. … Parents can be mistaken about their children, just as Eve, the mother of all living, was mistaken about her firstborn. Genesis 4:4." (*Instruct, fut. ministri. Jen. 1660. p. 6.*)

**Thesis II.**

That the woman 1. according to God's Word is bound in conscience to be subject to her husband as her lord and head and to obey him in all things (Gen. 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:12-14; Rom. 7:2; Eph. 5:22-24; 1 Pet. 3:1, 6 [cf. Gen. 18:12]).

Just as the mutual relationship between parents and children is in a sorry state in our day, so too is the mutual relationship between husbands and wives. The spirit of independence, which has now taken hold of almost all peoples, is now also rampant among women. Entire societies of women have organized themselves, shamefully enough writing the words “women's emancipation” on their banners and making them their slogan. In the state, they demand to have a say and finally also to sit in the council of nations, to make laws, and so on. And miserable, worthless politicians, who themselves inwardly mock this, publicly support this deception because they fear that it will soon prevail and gain power and influence. In the church, however, such women do not want to be mere listeners, as the apostle clearly and unambiguously demands, but they also seek to take control of the pulpit, and miserable, enthusiastic souls who do not question God's Word already allow them to do so. It is therefore not surprising that the spirit of independence, which many shameless women now display in the state and the church, also manifests itself in the home toward men and seeks to assert itself. We will therefore now briefly examine what relationship between woman and man is right according to God's Word and our confessions.

The passages cited are the scriptural proof of this. Already in Genesis 3:16 we read: “Your will shall be subject to your husband, and he shall be your lord.” This submission to men should be

a lesson for the entire female sex, which should be constantly reminded of what Eve did. Eve is the mother of all living, but also the one who allowed herself to be seduced by Satan and as soon as she herself was seduced, she tried to draw her husband Adam into the misery of sin, which she succeeded in doing, to the temporal and eternal detriment and unspeakable ruin of the human race. Now, submission is not a punishment for believing women, but it is a chastisement to remind them of the Fall. Those women who are addicted to innovation now say, of course, that this Bible verse applies only to barbaric times, but not to ours, in which women have the same rights as men. But this is completely contrary to all reason and experience; for even a blind man can see that—to speak with the unbelievers—nature has not given women the gifts to rule and govern, and therefore even an atheist must admit that women do not have this calling, this vocation. To this, the Word of God now adds and explains this directly.

1 Tim. 2:12–14: “But I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.” Is this not terrible? The apostle says clearly and plainly that a woman should not be allowed to teach, and yet our pious Methodists, Baptists, etc. give women this freedom! They argue that we now live in a different time, as if time mattered when it comes to what is right or wrong. What all these souls lack, unlike the Lutheran Church, is that they do not hold fast to the written Word. The Lutheran Church alone is so simple-minded that it submits unconditionally to the word of the apostles and prophets. All other souls, however, blinded by the devil, live in this great godlessness, asking nothing of what is written in Scripture; but if something seems good to their reason, they simply do it. What reason do we have, then, to thank God, who has led us into a church that submits so simply to His Word that there can be not the slightest doubt that it has the right doctrine and is the right church! Woe, therefore, to those whom God has led into this church and who leave it as apostates! They will fare badly on the Last Day.

Verse 13: “For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.” With this, the apostle seems to be saying: Even if humans had not fallen, even if Eve had not been tempted by the devil and had not subsequently tempted Adam, she would still not have been completely equal to Adam, at least not in all respects. That the apostle wants to say this is also

the opinion of many orthodox theologians. Even then, Eve was the weaker part in a state of innocence. That is why the devil did not dare to approach Adam, whom he feared would reject him. With Eve, the evil enemy succeeded in his temptation.

Rom. 7:2: “A woman who is under her husband while he lives is bound by law; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning her husband.” A Christian woman must therefore recognize, if she does not want to incur God's wrath, that she is under her husband (*υπ ἀνδρός*), that he is her lord.

Eph. 5:22-24: “Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church, and he is the Savior of His body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives should be to their husbands in everything.” It is particularly wonderful that the apostle here introduces the relationship of the church to Christ as an example. From this we see that the woman is certainly not the man's slave, not his maid, although a righteous woman will not shy away from performing maidens' duties for her husband. But the husband should not treat her like a maid, let alone discipline her like a child. — “In all things.” It is well known that a few years ago there was great excitement in England because women in both the Presbyterian and Episcopal churches demanded that the promise of obedience be omitted from the marriage ceremony. This is clear proof that all these women do not belong with Christians. For God's Word speaks so clearly that they must know that their desire is not in accordance with the Bible. “In all things” naturally means only in those things in which the woman does not sin against God by obeying. But more on that later.

1 Peter 3:1, 6: “Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives;. … Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.” Here the apostle Peter demands the submissiveness of the wife even to an unbelieving, pagan husband, and that is to be her preaching. She should not always be nagging her husband that he must be converted. That is precisely what prevents the conversion of such men. Without words, a woman should seek to win an unbelieving husband through her holy, chaste, humble, gentle, friendly, and loving conduct. Peter teaches that a woman should not run away when she feels she can no longer bear her godless husband. She must remain even with such a man, as with Abraham, whom his wife called “lord,” as we read in Genesis 18:12.

Where can we find women today who speak of their husbands as their lords? They would think they were making themselves ridiculous; it would not come from their hearts. They often even think that men should follow their lead. They want to be mistresses in the house. Woe to them! They will have a heavy responsibility on that day.

The following are testimonies to what has been said from the writings of orthodox theologians.

Luther: "Secondly, as God says in Genesis 3:16, the woman's will shall be ‘subject to the man,’ that is, the woman shall not live according to her own free will; for if Eve had not sinned, she would have ruled and reigned with Adam, the man, as his co-helper. But now that she has sinned and seduced the man, she has lost her authority and must do nothing without the man; wherever he is, she must go with him and bow down before him as before her lord, whom she must fear, be subject to, and obey." (Sermon on Marriage. 1525. StL X, 669. § 50)

Worldly-minded young men often promise, when courting a Christian girl, that she will always have complete freedom to attend church and that they will never move to areas where there is no Lutheran church or school. This then beguiles many parents, if everything else about the suitor is in order. But all these promises, even if they were confirmed with an oath, are of no avail if the man then moves away for some reason to a wild, foreign region. The wife's father may then run from one court to another, but he will receive no help. The poor woman must follow her husband as a sacrificial victim; if she does not, she commits adultery. It must be said, of course, that women who marry such men deserve no better, but the parents are mostly to blame. They have experience, should know better, and should never allow marriage to such a worldly man. — It is remarkable that the Apostle writes in Eph. 5:33: “The wife should fear her husband.” This word is rarely obeyed nowadays. A wife may well often fear her husband's passion, but the reverence for her husband that God demands here hardly exists anymore. The world says, “That is a fashion that does not suit our time and our country.” But then heaven and salvation do not suit our time either, for the way to salvation is to live in our state according to God's Word.

Balduin: "The president and, as it were, the head of the family is the man, to whom alone the household rule belongs according to divine and human law. For this is what God himself wanted (Gen. 3:16); this is what Paul repeated from God's mouth (Eph. 5:22 and Col. 3:18); this is why he also called the woman ‘under the man’ (Rom.

7:2); indeed, it is contrary to nature for men to be subject to women; it is also the greatest dishonor for men to be ruled by women. ... The man therefore rules the household, but in such a way that he keeps the wife, the children, and the servants in check in different ways. He rules over the wife ... as is customary among equals and comrades, so that the wife willingly respects the authority of the man and in this way a kind of aristocracy arises. This kind of aristocracy is the supreme power in which the nobles have one and the same right, but one among them has the supreme authority.... They are 'in undivided goods', as the Saxon says; but this mixed family has one prince, namely the man, and so the status of this household is aristocratic, but the administration is monarchical, and in this sense marriage represents a kind of kingship, not popular rule, as Chrysostom writes." (*Disp. de cap. IV. Ep. ad Coi. 1617. p. A. 2. 3*.)

What is questionable in this passage is the statement: "as is customary among equals." There are forms of government in which certain families have the upper hand, the so-called aristocracy, i.e., government by the nobles. Together, they form the government, but none of them is actually the ruler of the others by birth. According to Balduin, this is also the case in the family. However, this seems to contradict the words: "The husband is the head of the wife."

Baier writes about the original relationship between husband and wife in a state of innocence: "The bearer of the divine image was not only Adam, but also Eve, insofar as it existed in original righteousness. However, with regard to that which was not equally necessary for both to attain their intended goal, we do not assert equality between the two parents in all respects. With regard to the knowledge of natural things, Eve seems to have been inferior to Adam. It is also generally taught that Satan preferred to attack Eve, the weaker of the two, with his temptation; this is referred to in 1 Timothy 2:14: 'And Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. However, they were not both given equal dominion, since the man was also the head of the woman and she was subject to him. Take, for example, 1 Corinthians 11:7 ff.: "But a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; for man is not from woman, but woman from man." (*Compend. P. I. c. 4. § 16. Vol. II, p. 157 sqq*.)

In any case, one should teach this point with great modesty, because Scripture gives only hints at most. The Word of God is not there

to satisfy our curiosity, but to teach us the way to salvation. If we find no clarification on a certain point, we can be assured that what we wanted to know is not necessary for salvation.

2. But also that the husband has neither the right nor the power to rule over the faith and conscience of his wife [Col. 3:18, 1 Cor. 7:16, 1 Sam. 25:14-19].

As we have heard about children, so it is also written about wives in Scripture.

Col. 3:18: “Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands in the Lord, as is fitting.” As soon as a woman has to say, “I cannot fulfill this command of my husband in the Lord,” she is also released from obedience, and even seriously warned not to be obedient in this case.

1 Cor. 7:16: “But how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?” These words are interpreted in very different ways, but Luther is probably right when he says that this is a warning against trying to convert an unbelieving spouse by force. One should therefore not marry an unbelieving person in the hope of converting them. How can you convert them? Perhaps the harshest means is the greatest obstacle to conversion. Paul points this out to women who had converted while their husbands remained pagans. They should only obey their husbands as righteous women should, but not bombard them with admonitions day and night. This is what the dear Monica, Augustine's mother, did, who also had a pagan husband.

1 Sam. 25:14-19: "But Abigail, Nabal's wife, told one of the young men and said, 'Behold, David sent messengers from the wilderness to bless our lord, but he rebuked them. And yet they have been very useful to us, and have not mocked us, and we have lacked nothing as long as we have walked with them when we were in the field. ... Now therefore, please consider and see what you will do, for there is certain evil upon our master and upon his house, and he is a man of no account, and no one may speak to him." This is a remarkable example of a woman doing something against her husband's will, for which the Holy Spirit apparently praises her. When David was persecuted and had to flee through the country like a hunted deer, he gathered a whole number of men around him, with whose help he protected himself against assassins and the like. He did no harm to anyone; on the contrary, wherever he was with his men, he kept good

order. This was also the case when David was staying near Nabal; he was like an iron wall for Nabal. But when David was in need and sent messengers to Nabal for food, while this rich miser was shearing his sheep, Nabal angrily spurned David's messengers and sent them away empty-handed. But what did Abigail do? “Then Abigail hurried and took two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five cooked sheep, five bushels of flour, a hundred pieces of raisins, and two hundred pieces of figs, and loaded them on donkeys, and said to her young men, 'Go on ahead of me; behold, I will follow after you. And she did not tell her husband Nabal about it.” The property of the house belongs to both the wife and the husband. Therefore, in case of need, she can give alms or do other good deeds without her husband's knowledge.

Luther says the following about 1 Corinthians 7:16 (see above): "That is: Therefore, you should live peacefully with each other in marriage, even with your non-Christian spouses (if they do not hinder your Christian way of life), and not defy them, nor drive them or force them to believe; for it is not your work or power to make anyone a believer, but God's alone. Since you do not know whether you are worthy that God will save them through you or not, you should be at peace with them, and no man should press his unchristian wife, or quarrel with her over the faith, nor a woman with her unchristian husband. But if God wants to convert them through you, he will also help you, and distribute grace and gifts among you who serve this purpose. This seems to me to be the correct understanding of St. Paul in this passage: that he does not want to compel anyone to faith or piety, but to live peacefully with everyone until God, through and with His grace, converts those whom He wants to convert, as St. Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 2:16. (Interpretation of Chapter 7 of St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians. 1523. VIII, 1118 [StL 8, 1065; AE 28:38 f.])

Luther develops a great wisdom here. The Jesuits make it the duty of a woman who has married a Lutheran to convert her husband to the Catholic faith above all else; so she works on him day and night and makes his life miserable. This is shameful and abominable; but what does a Jesuit, a Roman priest, care about the Word of God? A Lutheran woman should know that she has no right to quarrel with her husband every day, to defy him, and to press him to convert.

Regarding the case of Abigail, Dannhauer writes: "If one's husband is a miser, can one, in good conscience, be secretly generous to others? Answer: One's conscience may waver between violating marital rights on the one hand and violating the virtue of charity on the other. However, one must obey God rather than men. ‘When you give alms, do not let your left

hand know what your right hand is doing,' says the Lord in Matthew 6:3; almsgiving should therefore be directed entirely toward doing good. ... The woman is not committing theft because she is spending what is rightfully hers from the joint funds. However, as the head of the family, the man is entitled to more than the woman in this case; although Abigail wisely and secretly refreshed David with a clear conscience, since Nabal was a miser, Ecdicia acted unscrupulously, according to Augustine, giving almost everything she had to two unknown wandering monks as alms, as poor people." (*Liber conscientiae.* Ed. II. P. I, 834 sq.) Properly and regularly, a woman should not steal a penny without the knowledge and consent, or at least not against the will, of her husband. But she may find herself in a situation where she is obliged to do good and must do so against her husband's will because he is a miserly wretch.

Luther: "You will achieve nothing by beating a woman to make her pious and obedient. If you beat out one devil, you will beat two into her (as they say)." (On 1 Peter 3:1 ff. IX, 753 [StL 9, 1051]) It is appalling to hear so often that men have beaten their wives. A wife is not under the rod like a child, but should be her husband's helper.

## Thesis III.

That the household servants (the so-called servants and other servants taken into the house) 1. are bound by God's Word to honor their masters and mistresses as their superiors according to God's Word and to faithfully carry out the orders given to them in accordance with the agreement made (Prov. 22:2, Gen. 31, 38, 39-41; Gen. 39:2-6; Ps. 101:6-7; Col. 3:22-24; Eph. 6:5-8; 1 Tim. 6:1-2).

We have noticed that when Scripture speaks of servants and maids, it almost always refers only to bondservants. The Hebrew or Greek word in the original text refers to a slave. Therefore, the passages that deal with the obedience of servants and maids to their masters cannot be applied without restriction to our circumstances. For our servants are not bondservants, but free people who are bound to nothing more than what they have voluntarily committed themselves to. They become servants through a contract, and the contract states what the master requires of the servant or maid. The servant and the maid who enter into the contract also state

what they are willing to do. Therefore, a master cannot expect a servant whom he has hired for a specific job to do other work. In such a case, the servant, the maid, as we also tend to say, would not be obliged to obey, but could invoke the contract. However, if the servant and maid do what they have promised, the master must also faithfully and conscientiously uphold the contract. It should be noted that the thesis states: “in accordance with the agreement made.” If the servants are to be assigned other tasks, a new contract must be drawn up each time. Only a slave is so completely at the disposal of his master with all his strength, his limbs, and all his time that the master can dispose of him as he pleases. We see that a contractual relationship exists between masters and servants in Matthew 20:13: “He replied, ‘My friend, I am not wronging you. Did you not agree with me for a penny?’” “Agree” means nothing other than that a contract has been made regarding the daily wage and the work.

The following passages necessarily belong here because they do not deal with slaves:

Prov. 22:2: “The rich and the poor are of one family; the Lord is the maker of them all.” It is a shameful principle that the Communists put forward that all people should be equal. God's Word says the opposite. Rich and poor, high and low, masters and servants must be among themselves. The Lord does not let everyone be born high, but some are the sons of beggars, which they have received from God and must accept willingly.

Genesis 31:38-41: "These twenty years I have been with you, and your ewes and goats have not been barren; I have never eaten the rams of your flock; I did not bring you the animals that were torn by beasts; I had to pay for them; you demanded it from my hand, whether it was stolen by day or by night. By day I languished with the heat, and by night with the cold, and sleep did not come to my eyes. So I have served in your house for twenty years, fourteen for your daughters and six for your flocks, and you have changed my wages ten times." If all those who employ workers would study this passage, they would see what unheard-of cruelty it is to treat their servants as the godless Laban did. It is certainly appalling that a revolution is now being waged [by Communists & Socialists] because of this, but it is even more appalling that our misers have brought it to the point where unchristian people no longer tolerate and bear with them, but can put an end to the matter with bloody violence. Those who accept work have a wonderful example here in Jacob, who served this shameful miser faithfully despite everything. This is not written in Scripture to make us think that Jacob was

a simple-minded man who should have left long ago. Jacob put up with all of Laban's injustice [unlike Communists] and waited for the day of retribution.

Genesis 39:2-6: "And the Lord was with Joseph, so that he became a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian. And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper before him. So he found favor in his sight and became his servant. He made him overseer of his house, and put all that he had under his hand.... So he left everything he had under Joseph's hands, and took no care of anything except what he ate and drank." From this narrative, Luther concludes, although he does not want to assert it with certainty, that Potiphar released Joseph, so that he was then only his paid servant.

Psalm 101:6-7: "My eyes are on the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me; and I delight in blameless servants. I do not keep deceitful people in my house; liars do not prosper with me." From this, every householder should learn that he should not take ungodly servants into his house; by doing so, he would defile his house, so that because of these wicked fellows, it could no longer be regarded as a Christian house. Of course, one can also employ ungodly people, but one should not take them into the family, as one does when one makes them servants or maids.

Col. 3:22: "Servants, be obedient in all things to your earthly masters, not only when their eye is on you and to please them, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for God. “

Eph. 6:5-6: ”Servants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with sincerity of heart, as you would Christ, not only when their eye is on you and to please them, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart, with good will."

1 Tim. 6:1: “Servants who are under the yoke should consider their masters worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be blasphemed.”

These passages do not really belong here, since they deal with bondservants; but since Luther has included them in the household rules, they should be cited. In Luther's time, slavery was already virtually abolished in Germany, and yet the Table of Duties, which assign each class its proper place, also finally state what is to be expected of servants, maids, day laborers, and workers. At the same time, however, this implies that there is a difference between these classes.

Luther: "This fourth commandment also includes further statements about all kinds of obedience to superiors who have the authority to command and govern. For from the authority of parents flows and spreads all

other authority. For where a father is not able to raise his child on his own, he takes on a schoolmaster to teach him; if he is too weak, he enlists the help of his friends or neighbors; if he leaves, he commands and hands over the reins and authority to others who are appointed for this purpose. Furthermore, he must also have manservants and maidservants under his house rule; so that all those who are called masters are in the place of parents and must take from them the right and power to rule. Therefore, according to Scripture, they are all called fathers, as they are to exercise the office of fatherhood in their rule and bear a fatherly heart toward their own. ... But what a child owes to his father and mother, all who are subject to the household rule also owe. Therefore, servants and maids should see to it that they not only obey their masters and mistresses, but also honor them as their own fathers and mothers, and do everything they know is expected of them; not out of compulsion and reluctance, but with pleasure and joy, for the sake of the former reasons, that it is God's command and pleases Him above all other works, for which they should give thanks and rejoice that they may have such a joyful conscience, and know how they should do truly golden works; which has remained and been despised until now, and for which everyone has run in the devil's name to monasteries, on pilgrimages, and for indulgences, with damage and a bad conscience. If one could now impress this upon the poor people, a maid would go about her work, praising and thanking God, with neat work, for which she otherwise receives food and wages, and obtain such a treasure that all those who are considered the holiest do not have. Is it not a wonderful glory to know and say that when you do your daily housework, it is better than all the holiness and strict life of monks? And you have the promise that you will prosper and do well in all good things! How can you be more blessed or live more holy, as far as works are concerned?" (Large Catechism on the Fourth Commandment LC Ten Commandments, 141-146)

It is madness that the devil has led people to believe that they can all be equal. They would soon realize how well the world could then be governed. If there were no more rich people, who mostly only stockpiled large supplies for their own interests, the inhabitants of large cities would soon starve to death, people would soon have no clothes, etc. A single farmer cannot cultivate a large farm alone; he must have servants. Those shameful people who engage in agitation want to eat bread, but it is against their honor to help out as farmhands. There is no other way; there must be one above and one below the other. It is often a big question whether the one who is placed at the top

does not do harder work than the one who pants and sweats at his mechanical work. It is shameful when a worker addresses his employer as if he were not only his equal, but even below him. That is turning the world upside down. —

When girls are asked to take a job, they often ask if there are small children in the family. If the answer is yes, they usually do not go. They want little work and high pay. These are all signs that their Christianity is not in good order, and even if they go to church every day, it has not the slightest value. The church is there to make people Christians, so that they may then serve God and their neighbor. Those who do not do this are not Christians, but miserable hypocrites. Of course, one only hears this in our Lutheran Church. The sects always talk about prayer, struggle, and the like. God forbid that we should think little of prayer and struggle! But what good is prayer and struggle if one is unfaithful in one's calling? Then one is a hypocrite before God. We must try to bring our dear young people to realize that when they enter service, they have chosen a wonderful Christian state.

2. But also that those who are in charge of the household have neither the right nor the power to rule over the faith and conscience of their servants. (Gen. 39:8-9; Dan. 1:8)

Only two passages are cited here, for since most of the servants mentioned in Scripture were slaves, it is very difficult to cite passages that are appropriate to our circumstances.

Genesis 39:8-9: "But he refused and said, 'Behold, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put everything he has under my authority. He has not withheld anything in the house from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a great evil and sin against God?" Joseph is a wonderful example. It is highly probable that he had been set free. He was a paid servant. Nevertheless, he was not unconditionally obedient to his mistress. When she tried to seduce him into fornication, he refused. Joseph knows that he would rise high if he sinned with her; he also knows that she could otherwise cause him the greatest harm. But he remains steadfast. This is an unsurpassable example of a pious servant who cannot be moved by anything to do evil for the sake of an ungodly master or mistress.

Dan. 1:8: “But Daniel resolved in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's food and wine,

and asked the chief chamberlain not to defile him." Daniel was not a slave, but a servant. The king had given strict orders to keep the Jewish boys well so that they could later become pages at court. But since Daniel knew that he would defile himself with the food from the king's table, he preferred to be given simple vegetables and water.

Brenz: "Can a householder with a clear conscience take unbelieving or papal servants into his service and force them to adopt our faith and the use of the sacraments? Answer: 1.) A householder has a similar office to that of the civil authorities, in whose territory Christians and pagans reside, all of whom they recognize as their subjects, provided they lead peaceful and honorable lives. Thus both Joseph in Egypt (Genesis 41) and Daniel in Persia were rulers in heathen courts, and undoubtedly employed unbelieving servants in their courts. When the Syrian prince Naaman was converted, he did not dismiss his pagan servants, nor did he take only Jews into his service (2 Kings 5). Philemon did not drive his pagan servant Onesimus out of his house until he himself fled, and Onesimus was subsequently converted to Christianity by Paul (see the Epistle to Philemon). 2.) However, a householder must ensure that his unbelieving and papist servants are instructed in the true faith, following the example of Joseph, who was royal co-regent of Egypt (cf. Psalm 105:2, where it says, "He instructed his princes according to his way, and taught wisdom to his elders!"). If they accept the true doctrine, all is well; if not, it will lead to their damnation. But they are not to be forced to convert, but left to divine judgment; nor should instruction and admonition be neglected, because the hour of conversion is uncertain, as Paul says to the believing woman who has an unbelieving husband: "But how do you know, O woman, whether you will save your husband," who is still an unbeliever? 2 Cor. 1:16. (Quoted in Miesler's *Opus novum.* Fol. 200. sq.) A master should not promise his servant more wages if he becomes a Lutheran. By doing so, he only makes the person concerned a hypocrite. He must live in such a way that the worker gains respect for his master's religion. However, if the servant wants to belong to the household in a different way, he must participate in the household worship. If the servant himself brings up the subject of religion, the master of the house should use the opportunity to explain to him the way to salvation.

The pious jurist Reinking writes: "If a councilor and servant, when he finds that his master is planning something wrong, and he himself advises against it, can he nevertheless carry it out with a clear conscience on his master's orders? For Joab advised against the census

of the people, along with other captains of the army; nevertheless, he went throughout Israel, counted the people, and carried out his master's command, even though the king's work was an abomination to him, as the Scripture says (2 Chron. 22:6-7). — In my opinion, this must be discussed and judged with distinction. If a master's command and decree in and of itself is against God, his commandment, and the love of one's neighbor, as when a master commands idolatry and the worship of idols, then no honest servant should or must carry it out. ... But if the work is not in itself an unlawful thing, contrary to God's commandment and the love of one's neighbor, but becomes unlawful and evil because of the lord's evil intention, I believe that a servant should not worry about it and should not be advised to resist it. The payment of the people is and was not an unlawful thing in itself, but a an indifferent thing. Moses and others counted the people at God's command and therefore did no wrong, Numbers 11. David's mistake therefore stemmed from evil intent, because he carried out the census out of gluttony and Satan's inspiration, 1 Chronicles 21:1. Therefore, Joab, at his master's risk, could well have done such an indifferent thing, which is not wrong in itself, in my opinion. However, I do not want to decide this question, but leave others free to think about it." (Quoted by Dannhauer in his *Liber conscientiae I, 846*.)

Thus we have come to the end of our theses, which we have been discussing for thirteen years, in which it has been proven that our Lutheran Church gives all glory to God alone in all these teachings, and never ascribes to creatures the glory that belongs to the great God. What belongs to God, it gives to Him in full. May God now help us not only to rejoice in belonging to such a church, but also to give Him all glory in our faith, confession, life, suffering, and death. Our motto in life must be: *Soli Deo Gloria*. This is what the angels sang immediately after the Savior was born. That was the first thing, and it is also the most important thing. Through Jesus, God has regained His glory. We have suffered nothing but shame, but now that God has regained His glory, we have eternal salvation. Blessed are all who believe this from their hearts! They will then see all the holy angels at the right hand of God and continue to sing the song of honor, praise, and glory to God from eternity to eternity. May God help us, dear brothers, that we too may one day be among this multitude and then give all honor to the dear God with all our hearts. For here we cannot do so, our shameful flesh clings to us. But there, when God has taken the old flesh from us, our doctrine will not only be theory, but we will also practice it. O Lord Jesus, help us all to do so. Amen!